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PLUCK AND LUCK

NED BLAZE

OR

THE CHARMED LIFE OF A BOY FIREMAN
AND OTHER STORIES

By EX-FIRE CHIEF WORDEN



She broke away from him and dashed into the house again, which was now filled up with smoke; one end of it was in a bright blaze. "Here, Tom Manley," he yelled, "help me hold her. She's all ablaze now."

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PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure

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THE CHARMED LIFE OF A BOY FIREMAN

By EX-FIRE CHIEF WARDEN

CHAPTER I.

A DARING RESCUE.

One day there was an alarm of fire in the thriving little city of Hobart.

It was in the middle of the afternoon when the merchants were busy in their stores and the hum of machinery in the factories was at its height.

There were two fire engines in the town.

At least ninety per cent. of the buildings in the place were of frame structure, for it had been built up rapidly in consequence of a railroad that had been recently built.

Like so many other places, it took on a boom and increased in population with a rapidity that astonished the oldest inhabitants.

A fire was a serious matter for the citizens, as they all knew that the frame buildings would burn like so much tinder when once a blaze was started; hence when the alarm sounded and the two fire engines went roaring through the streets, nearly half the population rushed to the spot with a vague consciousness that a great peril was impending.

Two streams were soon playing on the burning building, which burned so rapidly as to astonish even the firemen.

There were four families living in the building, on floors above the store, and in each family were from two to five children.

Naturally the mothers became not only excited, but so confused that they hardly knew what to do.

Some of them were eager to save pet possessions, while others ran screaming from room to room in quest of their little ones, instead of seizing the youngest ones and vacating their quarters.

One mother, some of whose children had been taken out, was still possessed with the idea that one or more of them were still in the building. She had to be taken out by main force, fighting the firemen all the way down to the street, and screaming like a maniac that her children were being burned to death.

Ladders, of course, were run up to the windows, and several of the inmates had been brought down to safety.

One mother, when she was brought out, kept counting her little ones in a most excited manner, insisting that one of them was still up in the building.

Several firemen told her that they had all been taken out, and that the missing one had been given in charge of some one in the crowd; but not being able to find it, she became frantic, and it took two strong men to hold her to prevent her from rushing back to certain death in the burning building.

Nobody but a loving, faithful mother could realize the terrible agony and excitement of the poor woman.

Those in the vicinity believed that she had suddenly lost her reason.

One of the firemen, a youth about eighteen years of age, named Ned Blaze, turned to one of his companions and remarked:

"If somebody doesn't make an effort to save her child so she can see him her reason will give way. Her brain is on fire as well as the building. I believe that all her children are out, but she doesn't. Hanged if I don't make an effort to save her from becoming a lunatic!"

With that he ran up to her, placed a hand on each shoulder, looked in her in the face, and asked:

"Madam, which room did you leave your child in?"

The woman looked him straight in the face and said:

"In the bedroom next to the front room. She was asleep on the bed. Save her, for if she is burned up it will kill me."

"All right, madam. You just keep still now, and watch me," and with that he made a dash for the ladder, which was up against the third story window, where long tongues of flames were reaching out ten feet or more.

"Come back! Come back!" yelled the foreman.

The other firemen took it up and repeated it.

Hundreds of citizens also yelled at him, but he paid no attention to them.

He ascended the ladder with the agility of a squirrel, and, to the utter amazement of all the spectators, pulled his fireman's helmet hard down over his face and dove headforemost through the red flame and disappeared inside the room.

Expressions of horror were heard from scores of people.

"He has gone to his death!" exclaimed many.

The nozzlemen of both companies threw streams after him through the window in the hope that they might render him some assistance.

Two minutes passed, and the conviction forced its way into the minds of every one that truly he had gone to his death.

The frantic mother, held by two citizens, stood with clasped hands gazing at the window through which the young fireman had disappeared, with an expression in her eyes and face that beggars description.

Groans came from her, but not once did she take her eyes from the window.

Suddenly she gave a wild shriek of:

"My child! My child! Save my little Jessie!"

The next moment the young fireman came out of the window headforemost, like a boy diving into deep water.

In the dense black smoke, mingled with red tongues of flame, nobody could see whether he had anything or not.

It looked as though he had escaped the flames only to be dashed to death on the stone pavement.

Nearly ten feet below the window he struck the ladder, caught a rung with his right hand, and his feet swung around. For a few brief moments he hung there, while the firemen below crowded underneath, with the intention of catching him when his grasp released and he should fall. But he didn't fall.

He managed to get a foothold on the rungs and began stepping down.

Then it was seen that he had a child in the grasp of his left arm.

The mother below actually held her breath, gazing until her eyes seemed to protrude from their very sockets.

Suddenly she collapsed and would have sunk in a heap on the ground had she not been held up by the two men who had hold of her.

A brawny fireman rushed up the ladder and yelled:

"Ned, let me have her!" but the young fireman was so blinded by the dense smoke that he couldn't even open his eyes, so he kept feeling for the rungs below with his feet.

The fireman rushed up almost on top of him, and seizing the dress of the little child, tore her away from his grasp, and quickly descended with her.

The little girl, who was about three years of age, had been almost suffocated.

She was gasping for breath and apparently unconscious.

She was the child of the frantic mother.

On feeling himself relieved, the young fireman, assisted by another, managed to reach the pavement, where he groped and staggered blindly until he was seized in the brawny arms of another fireman, who threw him across his shoulder, yelling out:

"Make way, there! Make way, there!"

The dense crowd gave way, and the youth was borne across the street into a drug store.

There willing hands rendered assistance.

He never lost consciousness, but he was tossing, struggling, and holding his eyes tightly closed.

His red fireman's shirt was burned in several places.

"Get out! Get out, every one of you!" cried a physician who was at the drug store, but nobody seemed to pay any attention to him.

An officer who had followed the fireman in there had to use his club before he could get the people to vacate the store.

Then he kept guard at the door, keeping out every one who had no business in there.

The unconscious mother was brought in, and just a few moments later a brawny fireman came in with the little girl in his arms, saying:

"The mother was right. One of the children was still in the room, and all of us thought they had been brought down."

He laid the little one on the counter.

Her flaxen curls had been badly singed, but they couldn't see that she had sustained any other injuries.

The two firemen rushed back out into the middle of the street to continue their work of fighting the blaze.

"Officer," sung out the druggist to the policeman at the door, "don't let any people come in here," and the burly policeman waved his club menacingly in the faces of excited citizens who tried to enter.

The one physician who was there, assisted by the druggist and his clerk, quickly brought young Blaze to.

He really had not lost consciousness, but he was blinded.

He would open his eyes and blink them, then rub them with his hands and cough violently.

Finally he gasped out:

"Where is that child?"

"Here she is, my boy," said the physician. "Don't worry about her. She is all right."

In a little while the child began crying.

"That's a good sign," said the doctor, but the mother was lying on the floor as though dead, and the doctor at once turned his attention to her, assisted by the drug clerk.

The druggist himself was holding the child on the counter to keep her from falling off.

"Mamma! Mamma!" the little one called in a childish fright, and tears came into the eyes of all those in the room.

"Mamma! Mamma!" she kept calling.

She struggled so that the druggist had to hold her by force.

"Where's mamma? Where's mamma?" she kept crying.

"Mamma is all right, little dear," said the druggist.

The child looked around at him quickly and knew him, for her home was right opposite the drug store.

She put her little arms around his neck and he felt her frame trembling from head to foot.

"Please give me some water," she asked.

"Yes, dear," and lifting her in his arms he went back to the room, where he gave her a glass of water, which she drank eagerly.

Then again she asked,

"Where's my mamma? Where's my mamma?"

"She's in the other room, Jessie," said the druggist, his eyes moist with tears. "She'll come to you in a few minutes."

In the meantime the physician was using all his skill and knowledge in trying to restore the mother to consciousness, and while he was doing so the young fireman started to leave the drug store to return to the fire engine in the street.

"Officer," called the physician, "don't let the young man out. He is in no condition to do so."

The officer at once told young Ned Blaze he couldn't go out just yet.

"You have no right to stop me," was the fierce reply.

"It's by the order of the doctor," said the officer.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT FOLLOWED THE RESCUE OF LITTLE JESSIE RUSSELL.

Out in the street a dense mass of people was eager to hear from the young fireman and of the mother and child.

They seemed to know that no other lives were endangered, and were content to leave the work of fighting the flames to the firemen.

They had witnessed the most daring rescue they had ever seen in their lives.

They had also seen the young fireman borne on the shoulders of another into the drug store; also the mother and child, and as no others were permitted to enter the store curiosity was excited to such an extent that they almost mobbed the store. They broke the plate-glass windows on each side of the door, which, of course added greatly to the excitement.

The roaring of the engines and the flames continued, yet the great multitude seemed to be interested only in the injured ones.

At last the druggist appealed to the officer standing on the threshold of his store to call out to other officers to disperse the crowd.

The officer looked everywhere, and it took him several minutes to locate a brother officer.

At last he told the druggist to bolt and lock the door with him on the outside, and he would try to disperse those nearest to him.

The druggist did so, and the officer began wielding his club, at the same time calling out:

"Get back! Get back!" but the mass behind them was so dense that they could not get back, and some suffered in consequence.

He wielded his club so vigorously that some of those nearest him commenced to climb over the heads of those behind them.

Suddenly the druggist thought of the hose he had in his store, went back and got it, and attached it to the faucet of the sink in the back room.

He then ran forward with the nozzle, and poured a stream through the broken window on the multitude outside.

The stream actually knocked the policeman's hat off of his head.

The water did far more than the officer's club to disperse the crowd.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the druggist. "Hold this hose out there as far as it will go, and pour the water on the crowd."

The officer did so, and the crowd scattered, hurling maledictions at him.

"That's right," said the doctor; "an excited crowd never does any thinking."

He then resumed his work of restoring the mother to consciousness, and by and by he was rewarded by seeing her open her eyes.

Assisted by the drug clerk, he raised her up, placed her in an arm-chair, and gradually she began pulling herself together.

Suddenly she burst out screaming again, for her child was the first thought that entered her mind.

"Madam," said the doctor, "little Jessie is here all right."

"Where is she? Where is she?"

The little child, hearing her mother's voice, broke away from where she had been placed and went running to her.

"Mamma! Mamma! Mamma!" she cried, and clasped her mother so closely that the physician, fearing harm, had to take hold of her hands and pull them apart.

The frantic mother seemed to think he was trying to take her child away from her, and she struggled to hold on to her.

Gradually, though, she seemed to understand that the child

was safe and that those around her were trying to render assistance.

"Now, madam," said the doctor, "your children are all safe, so calm yourself."

She took the child's face between her hands and glared at it; then she held her off at arm's length, and her very soul seemed to be concentrated in her gaze.

"My darling! My darling!" she murmured repeatedly.

Then she ran her fingers through her child's hair, and noticed on one side the curls had been burned away.

She seemed to be thinking hard, and for nearly five minutes didn't utter a word.

The child stood there gazing at her.

The doctor was watching her closely, apprehensive that her reason had been shattered.

"Madam," said he, "here is the young man who went up and brought little Jessie out," and he took Ned Blaze by the arm and led him up in front of her.

She looked up at him and a gleam of intelligence came into her eyes.

"I found her just where you told me she was," said Ned, "and we both came out all right."

"They told me that they were all out, but I knew better," she remarked. "I could hear her little voice as she called for me. I knew she was in there and she wanted her mamma," and she caught the child in her arms again and covered her face with kisses.

The she burst into tears.

"Ah!" ejaculated the doctor. "Thank heaven the tears have come! That was all that was needed. Her tears will be a great relief."

He was right. She wept hysterically.

The druggist and his clerk tried to calm her.

"Let her alone," said the doctor. "Let her cry as much as she wants to. It will relieve her overcharged mind and nervous system."

He gave her a drink of water. Then a few spoonfuls of whisky.

She gradually calmed down and sat there looking through the broken windows of the store at the burning buildings across the street.

The firemen were working heroically to prevent the flames from spreading throughout the block.

The building next to the one the woman had been living in was a frame one and nothing could save it; but the next one to that was a tall brick structure with a double wall, and the fire could go no farther on that side.

The firemen turned their attention to preventing it from extending in the other direction, and at last succeeded in doing so.

The mother's other children were brought to her, and she knew to a certainty that they were all safe.

Little Jessie had escaped being burned other than the loss of her flaxen curls on one side of her head.

Her dress, too, had been burned in several places.

Gradually she came to realize the enormous debt she owed the young fireman, and as he had not been permitted to leave the drug store she called to him, and when he went over to where she was sitting she seized his hand and kissed it repeatedly, saying:

"I know you. You are Ned Blaze. You have saved my little Jessie's life, and I'll never utter another prayer as long as I live without beseeching heaven's blessing upon your head. I saw you go in through the window in the face of long tongues of red flame that seemed to be glad to burn you up. I could then remember no more. I can't understand how you got out alive."

"Neither can I, madam, but I guess that heaven wanted to let the little girl live. I never got a burn, but I was nearly strangled to death by smoke and flame. It seems to me I swallowed streaks of flame like an Italian swallows macaroni. Just as soon as I plunged in I heard the little child calling: 'Mamma! Mamma!' and her voice guided me into the room where she was sitting up on the bed."

The mother caught the child in her arms again and began screaming and kissing her, for she again realized the peril to which she had been exposed.

"Madam! Madam!" the doctor called out. "Calm yourself."

"How can I?" she asked.

Then a sudden thought struck her; she gave a start, and asked:

"Where is my husband?"

Of course no one could tell her, but the druggist explained

that the police were keeping the crowd from the drug store, and that he was probably compelled to retreat up the street.

At that moment the druggist heard a heavy pounding on the back door. He went into the rear room, and there found the woman's husband.

"They tell me my wife and children are in here," he said to the druggist.

"Yes; I'm glad you have come," and he opened the door and admitted him.

He quickly joined his wife and children, and the meeting was an affecting one in the extreme.

"John," said the wife, "we've lost everything but the children."

"That's all right, Mary. As long as the children are saved we are all right. Our furniture was insured, you know."

"Yes, yes; but I've lost things I wouldn't have parted with for ten times the insurance; but, as you say, we are all right as long as the children are with us."

"Yes, so we are," and he kissed each one of the little ones only as a loving father could, and then kissed the mother.

"Russell," said the druggist, "it was a narrow escape for the little girl. I believe that Ned Blaze was the only one among all the firemen who had nerve enough to go in after her, and he did it right in the teeth of the flames."

"Yes, so they told me out on the street," said Russell, and seeing young Blaze standing near the window watching the firemen battling with the flames, he rushed at him, caught him in his arms, and said:

"Ned, John Russell is your friend for life."

CHAPTER III.

A GENEROUS CITIZEN.

After spending a half hour or so in the drug store with his wife and children, John Russell inquired of the mother what he should do about finding shelter for them.

"Why, go to sister Ellen, of course," said Mrs. Russell.

"All right, I will," and he left the place by the back door and was gone perhaps a half hour, when he returned and said his wife's sister had told him to bring them all to her home.

He picked up little Jessie in his arms and started to the rear of the store with her, followed by the other children.

Mrs. Russell went up to Ned Blaze, threw her arms around his neck and kissing him, said:

"I can't find words to tell you how grateful I am, Ned, but as long as I live I will pray for your happiness."

"That's all right," said Ned. "I can't tell you how glad I feel that I was able to save the little girl. Everybody else was saying that all the children were out, but when I looked you in the face and heard you say that she was on the bed in the room back of the front room, I felt sure that you knew what you were talking about. It was a desperate chance, and I really can't understand how I got out of it as well as I did."

"Well, no one will ever know how much I suffered during the time when you disappeared until you came out with her. Had you come out without her I would have died where I was standing."

With that she turned and followed her husband and children.

"Now, look here, doctor," said Ned, "what in thunder are you keeping me in here for, when I ought to be out working with the boys?"

"It's for your own good, my boy," said the doctor. "Your eyelashes have been badly singed, and so have your eyebrows."

"Well, they'll grow out again."

"Yes; but I notice you keep coughing."

"Well, that's not to be wondered at. I swallowed a streak of fire as long as a fence rail, but I feel no bad effects from it other than a cough."

"That's it. I want you to take something for that," and he repeated verbally a prescription to the druggist, who at once put it up in a four-ounce bottle.

Then taking up a measuring glass, the doctor poured out a dose and told him to take it.

He did so promptly.

When he had swallowed it he made an awful wry face and remarked:

"By George, that is worse than the fire, Doc!"

"Yes, it's a pretty hot dose, but it's just what you need. You take a tablespoonful of it every two hours until you have taken all in the bottle. It will relieve the cough and

prevent inflammation. Don't stop taking it because you feel better, but be sure that you take it every two hours."

"All right," and he thrust the bottle into his trousers pocket.

"Now, you go straight home and lie down," the doctor ordered.

"Oh, thunder! I'm all right."

"You may think so, but if you don't obey my instructions you'll be in a bad way before to-morrow morning, and you won't be able to swallow food inside of a week, not even liquids."

"Say, is that so?"

"Yes, it is so; and you don't want to forget it. You'd better go out the back way and go straight home without stopping to shake hands with or talk to a crowd of friends. You have done your share to-day, and it was an awful big share, too."

"Yes," put in the druggist. "I've seen many a fire and rescues, but that was the most daring of all. If you don't bear a charmed life I never saw a man who did."

"Well, I hope I do. I don't understand myself how I got out with so little hurt."

"Oh, you are a great deal worse than you think you are. You couldn't breathe without swallowing fire," said the doctor, "for I saw you when you plunged in through the window, right in the face of a sheet of flame."

"Doctor, I guess you are trying to give me a scare," remarked Ned.

"All right. You had better be scared now, for if you don't obey instructions you will be scared enough by morning. Now, when you get home do just as little talking as possible. If your brother firemen run in to see you in the evening shake hands with them, but do very little talking. Watch the clock and take that medicine promptly on time."

"All right," and he went out through the back door to make his way home.

His mother was a widow with three children, two daughters and Ned.

He was the eldest, and was the bread-winner of the family.

After he left the druggist opened the door of his store and several citizens, as well as firemen, came in to inquire about the mother and children, as well as Ned Blaze.

They were assured that they were all right and had gone away.

"Well," said a citizen, "that boy deserves recognition at the hands of the entire city."

"Yes, so he does," replied the druggist. "It looks as though he has a charmed life."

"Yes; what do you know about him?" the citizen asked.

"Very little. I only know that he is the son of a widow, and is the main support of his mother and sisters."

"Well, I've seen him a number of times, but never noticed him. Can you tell me if he was injured in any way?"

"Well, yes; he lost his eyelashes and nearly all his eyebrows, and the doctor says that he may be injured internally by inhaling flames. He has sent him home with very rigid instructions to lie down and do little or no talking. He also gave him medicine to take."

"Well, see here," said the citizen, pulling a roll of bills out of his pocket, "if you know his mother, send that to her," and he handed the druggist a twenty-dollar bill.

"All right; I will. Wish I was able to duplicate it."

"Yes; it ought to be duplicated a thousand times. I was an eye-witness of his work, and was never so stirred by another's act in my life; and, by the way, how about that little child? Was she hurt?"

"Not much. She lost about half her curls."

"Well, the family lost everything they had in their rooms, didn't they?"

"Yes, I believe they did; but I heard the husband say his household effects were insured."

"Well, it will take them some time to get the insurance money. They'll need food and clothes," and peeling off another twenty-dollar bill from his roll he handed it to the druggist and told him to send it to the father or mother.

"That I will," said the druggist. "I wish there were more men like you in Hobart, Mr. Sturgis."

"That's all right," returned the citizen. "The whole thing has struck me harder than I was ever hit before in my life. I was where I could see the mother's face, and I never saw such an expression of agony on a human face before. Don't mention my name to them, but if you can find out they need anything, let me know."

Sturgis was one of the mill owners in Hobart, and nobody

had ever accused him of excessive generosity, for he was a strict business man whom no one suspected of entertaining any sentiment outside of business; but the daring of the young fireman and the agony of the mother had touched his tenderest spot.

He went out on the street and heard people in groups talking about Ned Blaze.

It struck him as a singular name, and he inquired of one if that was his proper cognomen.

"Yes," replied the other. "I knew his father well."

"Well, it's a singular name, and it strikes me as being an appropriate one in view of what he did to-day. He seemed to be familiar with a blaze, for I saw him go into the building through a window out of which a solid mass of flame was issuing."

"Yes, I noticed that," said the other. "I know the boy well. He is a chum of a son of mine. He is as brave as a lion, a strong, healthy lad, who doesn't know what fear is; but I'm blessed if I can understand how he got out alive with that child."

"Neither can I," said Sturgis. "It must be that he bears a charmed life."

"Well, how about the little child? She must have a charmed life, too?"

"That's so. I never thought of that; but it may be that it is the result of the protection he gave the child. She lost some of her curls, and those that were not singed were probably pressed against his bosom; but still I can't understand why she escaped with no farther injuries."

"Say," said the other, "did you see him come out headforemost?"

"Yes, I did. I saw him catch a rung of the ladder, and his whole frame swung around until he had reversed his position. He must have an extraordinary grip, to say nothing of presence of mind."

"Yes; I guess you are right. He ought to be rewarded in some way."

"So he ought, and I'm going to see that he is."

CHAPTER IV.

THE RICH MAN'S VISIT.

Following the doctor's advice, Ned Blaze wended his way home from the drug store, leaving the place by the back door; he managed to reach his mother's little cottage without meeting any of his friends.

Many of the members of the fire company to which he belonged commented on his prolonged absence, and believed that he was badly hurt.

They had seen big, broad-shouldered Tom Manley carry him into the drug store, and that was the last they saw of him.

They battled with the flames until they were suppressed.

It was a hard fight, and a brave one.

The two buildings were totally consumed; yet it was a victory for the fire department from the fact that the fire was confined to the narrow space where it started, for off on the right were several old frame buildings that nobody in the thousand who looked on expected to see saved.

As soon as the fire engines returned to their quarters, which they did just a little before sunset, many of the firemen made a break for Ned Blaze's little home.

He was only a private in the company, but was popular with all the members.

They knew that he was a very courageous youth, but the act he had performed was such a marvelous one that they were puzzled to understand how he came out of the building alive.

A batch of five of them appeared at the cottage door.

His mother answered their knocks.

"Mrs. Blaze," said one of them, "we want to see Ned."

She threw the door wide open, and said:

"Come in. He is lying down, and the doctor says that he mustn't talk."

"Thunder! Is he badly hurt?"

"Well, he doesn't look like it, for only his eyelashes and eyebrows were burned, and his fireman's shirt is ruined."

She led the way to Ned's bedroom.

There he reached out and shook hands with them.

"Look here, my boy," said Foreman Hackett, as he shook hands with him, "how is this? Your mother says that the doctor has prohibited you from doing any chinning."

"Yes, that's right," said Ned, in a rather low tone of voice. "He says I am worse hurt than I think I am."

"Ned, Ned," interposed his mother, "don't talk any more now."

The firemen couldn't understand it; yet they did know that he had been right in the flames, for they saw him plunge in through the window of the burning building.

Ned then asked his mother for a pencil and paper, which she brought to him. He then wrote:

"I swallowed fire enough to keep fat on for a month, the doctor says."

The foreman took the paper and read it to the other firemen.

They looked at each other, and one of them asked:

"What doctor was it?"

Ned wrote down the name of Dr. Hepworth.

"Well, he is a good doctor," said the foreman; "but hanged if I can understand how a man can swallow fire and live!"

Ned wrote down:

"Neither can I, but I swallowed fire, all the same."

"Well, how do you feel?"

He wrote:

"Hanged if I know! I feel queer. He gave me something to put the fire out, and I have to take it every two hours until it has all been taken."

"Well," said Hackett, "if you are still on fire, what's the matter with our bringing the engine around here and playing the water on you?"

He wrote:

"Do so. Put the nozzle in my mouth and give me the full force of the engine."

That made them laugh, and he smiled, too.

"Look here, Ned," said Hackett, "are you playing a game on us?"

"No," he wrote; "but I don't know but what the doctor is playing a game on me. If I didn't know him to be a good doctor I would say that he was; but he ought to know his business. I didn't know it was such a deprivation to be forced to keep my mouth shut. Just think of it. If I were a girl wouldn't it be rough?"

Even his mother smiled, notwithstanding her anxiety.

Then she remarked:

"How strange it is that all of you think a girl would die if she couldn't talk."

"Well, some of them would, madam," laughed Hackett.

"She wouldn't die any quicker than you men would. There's one thing, though, that a girl wouldn't do, and that is to swallow fire."

Ned wrote:

"I wouldn't have done it, either, if I could have helped myself; but for a moment or two I was full of red fire."

Again the firemen laughed, and Hackett inquired:

"Was it fire or smoke, Ned?"

"Well, it felt like fire. It certainly was hot enough."

Then he motioned to his mother to give him a dose of the doctor's medicine.

He took it and made such a wry face that the firemen chuckled.

Seizing the pencil, he wrote:

"It's a case of fighting fire with fire. Take a swallow of that stuff and you will feel warmed up all winter."

Each of the firemen took the bottle from Mrs. Blaze's hand, and taking out the cork applied it to his nose.

"What is it?" one of them asked.

Mrs. Blaze shook her head.

The firemen were about to leave when others came in, and they were told what Ned's condition was: that the doctor had imposed complete silence, and they all left the cottage together.

Pretty soon Mr. Sturgis, the rich mill owner, came in.

Mrs. Blaze didn't know who he was, and looked at him inquiringly.

"Madam," he said, "my name is Sturgis, the mill owner. I saw your son plunge headforemost into an enormous red blaze and save a little child from death. I want to see him and shake his hand."

She knew the gentleman well by reputation, for he was regarded as the wealthiest man in Hobart.

"Come in, sir, and be seated," she said, opening the door for him. "He is lying down, as Dr. Hepworth has imposed silence on him, and says he mustn't do any talking, but take his medicine every two hours. He thinks that he is injured internally."

"Well, I hope not. Is he burned anywhere internally?"

"He doesn't complain of being burned," she replied, "but his eyelashes and eyebrows are badly singed."

I found where he lay in his room Ned heard the gentleman give his name.

He knew him well by sight, so he arose and walked into

the room with the pencil and paper in his hand, on which he had written:

"I thank you, sir, for your visit. The doctor says I inhaled a good deal of flame. I guess I did, or else it was very hot smoke, and he has imposed silence on me."

"Well, see here, my boy," and Sturgis extended his hand to him, "you did the bravest thing I ever saw at a fire in my life, and I couldn't resist the temptation to come around and tell you so. When you are permitted to talk again, I want you to tell me how you got out alive."

Ned wrote:

"I couldn't tell you, sir. I don't know how I did. According to all rules, I should have been burned to a crisp, and also the child, but she only lost a few of her curls. I guess Providence protected us both."

"Maybe so! Maybe so!" said Sturgis. "It was the most audacious thing on your part I ever heard of. And, madam," he said, turning to the widow, "you ought to feel proud of your son."

"I've always been proud of him, sir, for he has been a good son to me, and since the death of his father, four years ago, he has kept us from starving."

"Ah! That accounts for it. I can understand now that the brave deed was not the impulse of a moment, but was the fearless courage of a brave man. Now promise me that if you ever need a friend you will come to me, and you can ask no favor at my hands that you won't receive."

Instantly Ned wrote on the piece of paper which he held against the back of a book:

"I thank you, sir, but I ask no favor except a chance to work and support my mother and sisters."

"Yes; that is the spirit of a brave, independent lad. At the same time a man's friends are entitled to help him along in the world."

Then, again turning to the widow, he added:

"You haven't given me the promise I asked."

"I give it freely, sir, because your visit shows that you mean what you say."

"Of course! Of course! I'd give all my fortune to be the father of such a son as yours."

CHAPTER V.

A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED.

While talking to Mrs. Blaze Mr. Sturgis was glancing all around the room, and he noticed that everything was neat and clean. But the furniture looked old, and the carpet was badly worn, and he saw that it was the home of a poor widow.

"Madam," said he, "may I be permitted to call again tomorrow? I want to watch your son's case, for it strikes me as an extremely singular one."

"Certainly, sir! Certainly," she replied. "I don't understand it myself. Dr. Hepworth is a good physician. We've never had him in our family, because he is known as a high-priced physician, and we've been so fortunate as not to require the services of a doctor."

"Fortunate, indeed, madam. Health is the best thing that one can have in this life. I don't believe that Dr. Hepworth will charge you anything for his services."

"Well, I don't think that Ned needs any doctor, for he says that the medicine is doing him good, but complains that it is as bad as the fire when he swallows it."

The gentleman extended his hand to Ned, shook it cordially, and then shook hands with the widow.

He made a very profound bow to her and passed out.

The neighbors knew him by sight, and wondered why he had paid the visit to the Blaze cottage.

Two of them ran in to talk with her about it.

She told them that the doctor said that Ned was hurt inwardly.

"Mr. Sturgis said that he saw Ned save the little daughter of Mrs. Russell, and he couldn't understand how he came out alive; so he called here to talk with him about it."

"Well," the neighbor asked, "how did he get out alive?"

"Why, how should I know? He says he doesn't know himself, but declares that Providence couldn't very well save the child's life without saving his."

"Well, does he think that Heaven would not save his life?" a neighbor asked.

"No; of course not. But he is just puzzled, and doesn't understand it. He never was a boy to wait for Providence to take care of him, but always went in to take care of himself. I once heard him say that Heaven didn't help anybody who didn't try to help himself, and I guess he is right."

Ned didn't care to have the women coming around him, so he went to his room, undressed, and laid down, for night had come on.

He told his mother a little later not to let anybody disturb him; that he thought he ought to sleep.

"Well, if you go to sleep," said his mother, "I'll have to wake you up every two hours and give you your medicine."

"All right. I won't object to that."

"Well, don't you want some supper before you go to sleep?"

"No; I guess I'd better not swallow anything but liquids. If you can make me some kind of gruel that won't feel harsh going down my throat, I'll take it."

Ned had a sister about fifteen years of age.

She was a very pretty girl, and helped her mother at dress-making.

The younger daughter was about twelve, a lively, romping little miss, who was as healthy a child as one could wish to see.

The older one's name was Mollie, and the younger Elsie.

The mother went on with her household work, leaving the youngest daughter, Elsie, to look after the callers.

The lamp was lighted in the sitting-room, and Elsie invited the callers to be seated, and told them that her Brother Ned couldn't be seen.

She answered all questions like the bright, lively child she was, while her mother and Mollie were getting supper in the kitchen.

Mrs. Blaze at once proceeded to cook something for Ned to swallow. It was a rice gruel, which he was very fond of.

When supper was ready Mollie went into the sitting-room, and told Elsie to go in and eat with her mother.

The child did so, while Mollie met all the visitors at the door and answered questions that were asked as to the condition of her brother.

After a while she ate supper herself.

Quite a number of firemen called during the evening, but not one was permitted to see Ned, who was soundly sleeping.

Before nine o'clock Dr. Hepworth astonished the widow by calling himself.

Of course the widow let him into Ned's bedroom, for it was then time for him to take another dose of the medicine.

She awakened him, and told him the doctor was there. "Look here, doctor, you are about as bad as the fire," was his greeting to the physician, "for you've locked up my mouth and made me go to bed three hours before my time."

"Well, I don't see that your mouth is locked."

"No, but it has been, for I've been using pencil and paper. I thought I ought to let you see that I can talk."

"That's all right, my boy. I am treating you, not for the present, but for the future. You take that medicine regularly, swallow no solid food for several days, and you'll be all right."

"All right, doctor. I'm a good hand to obey orders."

"It's well for you that you are. I will call again in the morning and see how you are getting on."

"Doctor," said Mrs. Blaze, "we are not able to pay you anything for your kindness, for we have no money in the house except what we earn by hard work."

"Madam," said he, "you will be worth a hundred thousand dollars when I send in my bill for my services. I am not charging you anything. Your son is entitled to any and everything that the citizens of Hobart can do for him; and let me tell you that if the time ever comes when any member of your family needs the service of a physician, do me the honor of sending for me. I'll never charge you a penny. Your son risked his life to save a helpless little one who had no show on earth to get out of that fire, and the doctor who would charge him or you anything for his services ought to be ashamed of himself."

The widow's eyes filled with tears, and facing the doctor, she said:

"I can't understand it, doctor."

"Of course not, madam; neither can any one else. There were three or four thousand witnesses of his daring performance, and I don't think a single one among that number can understand how he came out alive. He must bear a charmed life. There can be no other solution of the mystery."

"Doctor, I have been thinking of an incident of my life that may throw some light upon it. About two months before Ned was born our little home took fire. My husband was away from home, and when I tried to get out of the house found myself completely surrounded by what looked like a solid wall of flame. I realized instantly that I was

doomed unless I got out, so I shut my eyes and walked right along the corridor and fell out of the front door, where I was picked up unconscious."

"Ah, madam! You bore a charmed life, then, and your son has inherited it. The mystery is solved. I know now where he got his fearless disregard of fire. Not one fireman in ten thousand would have plunged into the flames as he did this afternoon."

With that he shook hands with Mrs. Blaze and passed out of the cottage, the last visitor for that night.

She set the alarm clock in her own bedroom, so that she would be sure to awaken at the proper time to give Ned the doctor's prescription.

He swallowed a cupful of the gruel she had prepared for him, and then fell asleep again; but every time the alarm clock went off, she arose, awoke him, and administered the medicine. Then she would set the alarm two hours ahead and retire.

There is no devotion like that of a mother's. There's no love like mother love.

The clock awakened the eldest daughter also, and she arose and assisted her mother.

Little Elsie was sleeping soundly, though, and never awakened during the night.

The next morning Ned told his mother that he had slept well; that every time he took the medicine he fell asleep again within five minutes after his head struck the pillow.

"I am feeling all right, mother," he added. "Dr. Hepworth knows his business; but I'm afraid he will be badly disappointed when he finds that we can't pay his bill."

"Ned, he says that he will never charge us a cent, and made me promise if any of the family ever fell ill that we send for him, and that he will never charge a penny for his services."

"By George, he is a good fellow, isn't he?"

"Yes; but everybody talks in the same strain, Ned. And, look here, after you fell asleep last night the druggist sent his clerk around here with a twenty-dollar bill, which he said he had been instructed by a friend to send to me."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" ejaculated Ned. "I don't like that, mother."

"Ned, we mustn't offend those who want to be friendly and help us out. It's frequently the case in the lifetime of many people that the assistance of neighbors are absolutely necessary."

"Well, mother, I don't want any of your friends to look upon us as objects of charity."

"No; neither do I, and nobody will; but everybody knows that we are very poor and have to work hard for our living."

"Yes; but I don't want anybody to pass the hat around for us."

"No; there was no hat passed around. The drug clerk said a gentleman had requested the druggist to send the bill to us from a friend, and whoever it was has shown that he is a friend."

CHAPTER VI.

NED BLAZE IN THE RANKS AGAIN.

True to his promise, Dr. Hepworth called at the cottage the next morning and asked Ned a number of questions.

"Look here, Ned, you are all right. I can see that you followed instructions, for if you had not you would have been in a very bad way, let me tell you. If you had neglected taking that medicine, as little as you may think of it, your chance of living would have been very slim. Indeed, now, I've brought another medicine for you to take, which is very soothing. Take it according to instructions, and avoid swallowing any solid food for several days. There are very few men who can swallow flame and survive. You have shown good old-fashioned horse-sense in following my instructions."

"Doctor, mother is entitled to all that credit, for we have an alarm clock in the house, and every time it fired off she sprang up, gave me the medicine, set the alarm again, and retired."

"Ah, there's the mother love. Her mother love has saved your life."

"Yes, doctor, and it isn't the first time. If any other boy has a better mother than I have I have never heard of it, and my sister got up every time she did and came in with her."

"Well, that's the sort of a sister to have, my boy."

Mollie and her mother heard the talk, and the former exclaimed:

"Oh, doctor, he has always been a good son and a good

brother. He is all we have on earth to keep us from starvation."

"Well, his mother and sisters can never starve in Hobart; if he never does another brave deed as a fireman what he has already done will never be forgotten."

"Look here; between you three you'll give me the swelled head," laughed Ned.

"No danger of that," returned his mother. "It isn't in you, Ned. I want everybody to know what a good son you have been to your mother," and with that she leaned over and kissed him.

The doctor hastily arose to his feet and left the room.

He was so deeply touched that he had to do so to conceal his emotions.

Mollie followed him out, and remarked:

"Oh, doctor, we are so grateful for your kindness."

"That's all right, little girl. I feel grateful myself. It's a pleasure more than I can say to be a witness to such devotion in a family."

"Oh, we have always loved each other, doctor."

"Yes, I can see that. Ned is getting along all right, and you have no cause for fear whatever. I was apprehensive last night that he wouldn't get his doses regularly, and he is indebted to his mother and you for that. I'll call again in the evening," and he went out.

Other visitors called during the day, and among them the rich mill owner, who expressed great gratification at the young fireman's improvement.

The doctor forbade Ned's going to work until the week had passed.

Then he pronounced him all right and as well as ever.

There was a meeting of the members of the fire company, which was called "Hobart Fire Company No. 2," and he received notice from the secretary to attend.

When he went to put on his red shirt he found several holes in it, for it had been scorched so that it crumbled under the touch of his hand.

The helmet had also been badly scorched in spots, but was still intact. Leather, when scorched, turns as hard as a board, but it fitted his head all right.

"Ned, you shouldn't put on that shirt," said his mother, "but wear one of your white ones."

"No, mother, they all attend those meetings with helmets and red shirts," and with that he passed out of the house and made his way to the headquarters of the fire company.

The entire membership was present when he entered the company room, and they greeted him with a great shout of welcome.

Every one had to shake his hand, and he laughingly remarked:

"I'm all right, boys. I'm a regular fire-eater."

"Well, that sort of diet won't agree with you," remarked Hackett, the foreman.

"No, I don't think I'd like it as a regular diet. I'm not as handsome as I was, being without eyelashes, and just a little patch of eyebrow; but aside from that I'm all right, and am ready for another brush with the flames."

"So are all of us," returned the foreman; "but we hope there will never be another fire in Hobart."

"So do I; but we must expect it."

"Well, you don't want to be so reckless when you run to another fire."

"Oh, what is the use of talking that way? Mrs. Russell told me the little girl was on the bed in the front room, and what was I going to do?"

"Nobody has any fault to find with you, Ned. No other man could have done what you did, and we are puzzled to know how you did it and got out alive."

Ned laughed, and said:

"That reminds me of a story I once heard about Bill Lucky. He prided himself on being able to lick any other man of his size and weight, but one day he tackled Bob Townsend, and got the worst thrashing of his life. Old man Smith asked how it happened, and I have never forgotten what he said. Said he: 'Hanged if I know! Bob licked me, and that's all I know about it.' I got out of that fire all right, and that's all I can say. I can't understand it and don't pretend to, but I just couldn't resist taking the chances when I looked into Mrs. Russell's face and read the agony she was suffering. As I reached the top of the ladder where the flames were pouring out in a red-hot volume, I heard the little child calling plaintively for her mamma. By George, before I knew it I dived right through it! I remember shutting my eyes and pulling the helmet well down over my head,

and not once in the building did I open my eyes. I was guided by the child's voice until I got hold of her."

"Say, Ned, haven't you been around to see the Russells yet?" one of the firemen asked.

"No; this is the first time I've been out of the house since the fire. Mother would not let me out until the doctor said it was all right."

"I saw the little one to-day," said another fireman. "She is running around as lively as a cricket; but they have cut her curls off on the other side so as to match those that were burned."

"All right," said Ned. "I am going to wait until she is grown up old enough to marry. Then I am going to make love to her. She has the sweetest little baby face I ever saw."

The firemen laughed, and Hackett, the foreman, said:

"That's right, Ned. Make a romance out of it. She is only three years old while you are eighteen. By the time she is eighteen you will be old enough to marry."

"Say," sung out the nozzlemans. "I've got money that says Ned won't wait that long, for all the girls in Hobart are talking about him, and they'll be making goo-goo eyes at him from this time on."

"Don't you believe it," said Ned. "A fellow without eyebrows or eyelashes won't be considered handsome."

"Oh, they'll grow out again."

Just at that moment the great fire bell sounded an alarm of fire.

Every member of No. 2 was there with his uniform on.

The sound of the first tap of the bell had scarcely died away before No. 2 was dashing down the street toward the second district.

Ned was running for all he was worth.

The fire was in a barn and stable, supposed to have been started by a stableman's pipe.

No lives were exposed save the horses in the stable, and if the reader doesn't know it, he should learn that one of the most difficult things is to get a horse out of his stall when the stable is on fire. They will stand there trembling and make no effort to get out. You may cut the halter and push him out of the stall, lead him out into the open air, and he will turn and rush back right in the face of the flames.

Hackett was well aware of that equine peculiarity; so he rushed into the stable, followed by other firemen, and held his handkerchief over the eyes of one of the carriage horses, and thus led them out.

Another fireman blindfolded a horse with his helmet, and in that way the horses were rescued; but they had to be turned out of the lot and into the street to prevent them from rushing back into the flames.

There was an immense amount of hay in the loft of the barn, and, of course, it made a tremendous blaze.

The sparks rolled up probably a thousand feet in the air in an immense shower; there was no wind blowing, but the residents all around were apprehensive of a general conflagration started by the sparks.

The flames reached such a height that every man, woman and child in Hobart looked at the magnificent panorama.

They were seen fully two miles away on the other side of the town.

The heat was so great that the nozzlemen had to stand off at a distance and throw a stream to about the limit.

Other firemen had to take their places, not being able to stand the heat, but they held their own manfully, for many very valuable residences were exposed.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW NED MADE ANOTHER RESCUE.

The barn and stable were totally consumed; not even a cloudburst could save the building, for there were many tons of hay in the loft of the barn, which blazed up so fiercely that a dozen streams of water would have had no effect on it; but the firemen watched carefully the surrounding buildings to make sure that the conflagration didn't spread any further.

There had been a dry spell of ten days at Hobart; ninety per cent. of the buildings were frame, so a conflagration could have been easily started. Hence the firemen continued to throw water on the smoldering embers as long as a single spark could ascend from them.

Then they returned to their quarters.

"Boys," said one of the firemen, "this is a bad night for us. The fire got away with everything in spite of us."

"Say, that ain't the way to look at it," said Ned Blaze. "We saved many thousands of dollars' worth of property

by keeping the flames confined to where they started; so you don't want to forget that when any hollow-headed fellows twit you about it."

"That's good sense," said Foreman Hackett; "and we saved at least five hundred dollars' worth of horseflesh, too. That was a fine pair of animals we found in there."

"How about the rats?" another asked.

"Rats look out for themselves. You've got to get a rat cornered where he can't get away before he will burn up. They have an instinct for looking for No. One. Any old sailor will tell you that the rats know when a ship is sinking, even before the crew does."

"Yes; I've heard that often," said Foreman Hackett, "and they leave the ship, preferring to die swimming rather than go down with the vessel."

"I don't call that looking out for No. One," said another. "They jump overboard and drown, when they might just as well drown with the ship."

"Well, they have a swimming chance, for when a ship goes down it creates a suction that carries everything down with it."

"What do you know about it?" another asked.

"The same way that you know such a man as George Washington ever lived—by reading. When a ship is going down the sailors will get into lifeboats and push off hurriedly to get away from the suction made by the ship when it makes its dive."

"That's right," said Ned; "but what puzzles me is how do the rats know that?"

"Do the rats really know it?"

"Well," said Ned, "I never heard a rat say anything about it, but I judge from what the rats do. All authorities agree that the rats are the first to leave a sinking ship until it has passed into a proverb; hence they must know it. I've read of dogs being bitten by poisonous serpents, and how they save themselves by eating certain kinds of grass, grass they have never eaten before in their lives, perhaps, but they always knew the grass was the antidote for the poison; but how did they find out?"

"Instinct! Instinct!" said Foreman Hackett.

"Yes. I guess that's right."

"Well," said another, "I can tell you something else about rats. A big rat will run from you, but if you get him cornered he will turn and fight anything as big as an elephant. He seems to make up his mind that if he has to die he'll die game. They first try to get away, but if they have to die they sell their lives as dearly as they can."

"Well, isn't that the case with any other animal?"

"No; the sheep never resists, nor will a rabbit."

"How about the billy-goat?"

The billy-goat knows which end his head is on," laughed another one of the firemen. "The mule, when you get him cornered, goes at you backwards, for he knows which end his battery is on. The billy-goat goes at you headforemost, because his battery is in front. Every animal knows his best fighting points."

"Yes. Ned, when he sees a sheet of flame, he opens his mouth, swallows it, and goes right ahead."

That created a laugh at Ned's expense, and thus the firemen wended their way back to their headquarters in a great good humor, for nobody had been hurt at the fire that evening.

They had been in the company's quarters scarcely ten minutes when another alarm was sounded for the district on the opposite side of the city from that in which the last conflagration occurred.

The boys were preparing to return to their homes, but at the first sound of the alarm every one sprang to his post and the engine dashed out into the street, followed by the firemen. It was a tremendous race for over a mile.

Ned Blaze and several others sprang upon the hook and ladder truck, and kept right up with the engine.

The fire was in a very large three-story private residence, and when the firemen reached there the blaze had gotten good headway.

"Boys," sang out the foreman, "this is another tinder-box, but do your best."

The other engine dashed up, and two streams began playing on the fire about the same time.

Evidently the fire had started downstairs, for the retreat of the inmates had been cut off from the upper story.

Ladders had been run up quickly, and the head of the family was seen at a window passing out his wife and children to the firemen.

His wife was a very large, stout woman, weighing consid-

erably over two hundred pounds, and she was in such a panic that it was extremely difficult to manage her. She didn't seem to understand anything that was said to her, but kept screaming and calling out to everybody to save her children.

Foreman Hackett was worried about how the men would be able to get her out without a fall. He directed two firemen to tie the rope around her waist and drop one end of it down to the men on the ground, after passing it over a rung of the ladder, so that if she lost her footing they would prevent a fall, and let her down gradually.

Suddenly there appeared a young woman at the window on the third floor, in a night dress, screaming for help. It seemed that every member of the household was screaming, but the stout mother beat them all.

The only ladder that could reach to the top window had already been run up to another.

The foreman, through his trumpet, called to the young woman to go to the other window, but the other window looked into another room, and she couldn't go there without going out into the corridor, which was filled with smoke and flames, yet she attempted to do so. She disappeared from the window; but when she opened the door of her room such a dense volume of smoke and flames poured in that she retreated to the window again.

Ned Blaze seemed to be the only one of the firemen who realized what had happened, and why she had returned to the window.

The girl herself seemed to realize her peril, for she stopped screaming, and tried to pull herself together to meet the inevitable doom that suddenly menaced her.

All of a sudden she screamed out:

"Ned Blaze! Ned Blaze! You can save me!"

It seemed to electrify the young fireman, and he cried out:

"I'll do it, or die trying," and to the astonishment of all the firemen he seized one of the asbestos ropes with which the company was equipped and dashed up a ladder belonging to the other company, but before he reached the first window a fireman came out with a ten-year-old boy in his arms.

He swung under the ladder and held suspended by his hands to a rung, while the other passed him. Then he swung around again and dove into a window.

He was heard kicking a door open, and all the firemen actually held their breath, wondering what would become of him.

The young woman who had called him by name leaned far out to avoid being strangled by the dense column of smoke that swept past her, and watched for him.

It was wonderful the presence of mind she exhibited. She was seen to turn her head to the left so as to get the benefit of the protection of the wall of the house, and thus avoid being strangled by the smoke.

She knew that he would have to pass out into the corridor and find his way up a flight of stairs to her room.

The other firemen seemed to understand that that was what he would have to do.

He could have waited for the fireman who had taken the boy down to reach the ground, and then it could have been put up to her window, but in such emergencies things have to be done quickly, for frequently human life hangs upon just a few brief seconds of time.

Ned groped his way along the corridor until he found the stairway.

He ascended that, and then there was no further obstacle in his way. He dashed into the room, felt his way to the window, and there came in contact with the young woman.

He leaned out and turned his head to the right to get a bit of fresh air, for he was nearly strangled.

The next moment he tied the asbestos rope around her waist.

Then he found an iron bedstead in the room, and dragged it almost up to the window.

"Out with you, quick!" he called to her almost with a gasp. She turned quickly and asked:

"Are you Ned Blaze?"

"Yes; out with you, quick!"

Without turning her head to go feet foremost she made a dive out of the window head first.

He held on to the rope, and before she had fallen three feet below the window-sill her position was reversed, and she found herself suspended in the air, feet downward. She caught hold of the rope with both hands, looking up at Ned Blaze as he played out the line until she reached the ground.

The moment her feet touched terra firma she sank down in a death-like swoon.

The next moment he came sliding down the rope himself, both legs of his trousers burning.

The nozzleman turned the stream of water on him for just one brief moment, and the fire on his clothing was extinguished.

When he reached the ground he was coughing at an awful rate.

The firemen yelled in frantic delight at his escape.

He let go of the rope and went staggering away.

It was untied from around the girl's waist, and she was borne away by Tom Manley.

She hadn't been hurt, at least had not been burned.

She was borne to the house of a neighbor.

The other members of the family were taken out, but the firemen had the biggest job of their lives in rescuing the mother, on account of her weight and frantic exertions.

The entire house was not burned down, but it was so badly damaged that it would practically have to be rebuilt.

It was the residence of a wealthy man named Mitchell, and it was his eldest daughter whom Ned had rescued.

She was about twenty years of age.

Ned had seen her, but never knew who she was, for the Mitchells had moved in after the boom started in the building-up of the city.

Had there been an extra fire-engine on the ground the damage would have been considerably less.

As it was, the result of the firemen's work was wonderful.

Long before the fire was extinguished the servant girl told that it had been caused by the explosion of an oil lamp in the basement. When the fact was known the firemen understood how the retreat of the inmates from the upper stories had been cut off.

The entire family was taken in by two neighbors, one living on the right and one on the left. The residences were about fifty feet apart.

Of course the other families were more or less panic-stricken, for fear the flames would spread, and not until the last spark was extinguished did any of them dare retire for the rest of the night.

It was some time after midnight before the firemen returned to their quarters.

"Ned, old fellow," said Hackett, "that was a wonderful feat that you performed to-night."

"Well, I don't know about that; but when I heard that girl call my name I would have dived into a fiery furnace."

CHAPTER VIII.

"THE FLAMES ROARED AND SCREECHED AND NIPPED ME IN THE BACK."

When the firemen returned to their quarters they began asking Ned Blaze all sorts of questions.

"How in thunder did you find your way up to the girl's room?" Foreman Hackett asked.

"Hanged if I know, foreman," he replied. "I think I am along the corridor with one hand against the wall till I struck the staircase. Of course I knew that she was in the front room, but I had my eyes closed tightly, and was holding my breath, too. But, by George, before I reached the door of her room I opened my mouth and swallowed enough smoke to inflate a balloon. The next moment I reached the window and leaned out, turned my head around against the wall, and got a whiff of fresh air. I knew the rope couldn't burn, so I tied it around her waist, intending to let her down hand over hand. Suddenly the thought struck me that by the time I let her down I would be exhausted for lack of air, so I felt around quickly for something to tie the rope to. As soon as I touched the bed I knew it was an iron or brass one. I tied it to the heavy iron side rails, and if I had not done that, why, it would have been all up with me. I've got at least half a dozen blisters on my legs, where the flames nipped me, and I never was so glad to have water thrown on me in my life as when I felt it splash on my back as I slid down that rope."

"Well, it beats anything I ever saw," said Hackett. "How a man can grope through a corridor filled with a dense cloud of smoke, work his way up a flight of stairs, and do all the things you did—say, how long can you hold your breath, anyway?"

"Hanged if I really know, but I have stayed under water at least two minutes by the watch. In diving I can always stay under the water longer than any of the other boys."

"Well, none of the drug stores are open this time of night. You ought to have something done for your burns," said the foreman.

"Oh, they are not badly burned, just blistered in a few spots here and there, but I don't know what in thunder I'll do for another pair of trousers. I haven't got a very extensive wardrobe. I lost a shirt on the night that I saved little Jessie Russell, and now here goes a pair of trousers."

"Say, Ned," called out one of the firemen, "I'll let you have a pair of mine."

"No; I'll put on my Sunday pants to-morrow, and go out and buy another pair before going to work."

Ned reached home about three o'clock in the morning. His mother, anxious about him, had not retired.

"My gracious, Ned, your trousers are nearly burned off of you," she exclaimed on seeing him.

"Yes, mother, and there is a little bit of the meat roasted, too."

"Ned, are you hurt?"

"Not much, mother—just a few blisters."

"Ned Blaze, you shall not run to any more fires. I simply won't permit it, for you are all that we have to keep us from starvation."

"None of that, now, mother. Don't forget that people in this life must help one another."

"I don't forget it, Ned; but you have got a mother and two sisters to help, and that's enough for one man."

She didn't ask him what he had done. All she wanted to know was if he was hurt.

She had remedies for burns in the house, and when he went to his room and threw off his trousers, which had really been burned from the bottom almost to his hips, she handed him a bottle and told him to bathe his burns with its contents before retiring.

Still not a word did she ask about whether he had saved any one's life. The thought uppermost in her mind was him and the perils he had been through.

The next morning the burns pained him so much that he didn't feel like going to his work.

"Ned," said his mother, "I am going to send for Dr. Hepworth. You know he told us he would never charge us anything for his services."

"Yes, mother, but really I don't like to call in a doctor unless I can pay him."

"You've nothing to do with it, Ned. I'm going to send Elsie after him," and then she examined both calves of his legs and the back of his thigh.

In one place was a blister as big as her hand, and it alarmed her.

She knew that it would make a wound that would require weeks to heal.

Little Elsie was immediately sent to Dr. Hepworth's residence.

He was reading about the fire in the morning paper, but the conflagration occurred at such a late hour that the paper had only the slightest account of it.

The Mitchell family were patrons of his.

The door-bell rang, and soon the servant went into the breakfast room and told the doctor that a little girl was at the door asking for him.

He went to the door himself, and recognized little Elsie.

"Oh, doctor, please come and see brother Ned. He was badly burned last night."

"All right, my child. Just wait a minute or two, and we'll run over there together," and with that he returned to his case of medicines, procured a remedy for burns, and putting it in a handbag joined the little girl without having taken anything but a cup of coffee for breakfast.

"Now, come on, my little girl," and he walked so rapidly that she had to run to keep up with him.

He asked no questions.

It was fully a quarter of a mile from his residence to the cottage of the Widow Blaze.

He found Mrs. Blaze getting breakfast, but when she heard his footsteps she ran into the sitting-room to meet him.

"Doctor," she said, "my son has been blistered on both of his legs; for heaven's sake, relieve him of the pain."

"Of course, madam; that is what I'm here for. Where is he?" and he followed her to Ned's room, where he was lying face downward.

He inspected the burns, and said:

"Oh, this isn't half as bad as getting fire down your throat, my boy."

"Maybe it isn't, doctor, but hanged if it doesn't hurt a great deal worse."

"Yes, of course; but it is a great deal easier to draw the fire out of a man's leg than to get it out of his stomach. Just

keep quiet, now, and I'll fix you up so that in a day or two you won't know that you have been burned at all. There have been some wonderful inventions for the cure of such injuries," and he asked for bandages, which Mrs. Blaze procured for him by tearing up an old sheet.

He tore the sheet into strips, saturated them with a dark-colored fluid from a six-ounce bottle, and then applied them to the burns.

Ned declared that he felt relief almost instantly.

"Now, Ned, my boy," said the doctor, as he was adjusting the bandages, "what have you been up to now?"

"Why, we had a little fire last night, two of them, in fact. We saved two fine horses from a burning stable, and then the Mitchell family, whose house caught fire by the explosion of an oil lamp. Mrs. Mitchell, you know, is a large woman, and the boys had a deuce of a time getting her out of the second-story window, for all retreat was cut off by way of the stairs."

"Well, you didn't pick her up and jump out with her, did you?"

"No; I brought her daughter out through the window of the upper story by tying a rope around her waist and letting her down to the ground. While I was doing that the flames roared and screeched and nipped me in the back. It was no use to kick, so I just stood it until she reached the ground. Then I slid down the rope myself."

CHAPTER IX.

NED'S BURNED TROUSERS.

"That's a big story told in a very few words," remarked the doctor when Ned had finished telling how he rescued Lena Mitchell.

"Well, there wasn't much to tell, doctor, for the work was done in much quicker time than it takes to tell it."

"Doctor," said Mrs. Blaze, "I don't intend to let Ned run to any more fires. I simply can't stand the awful suspense."

"Madam, permit me to suggest that you do nothing of the kind. He is not going to lose his life in a fire."

"I don't know, doctor. He has come very near losing his life twice now. You must remember that he is all I and my children have to look to for support and protection."

"Madam, you will gain the reputation of being a mean, selfish woman if you do what you threaten. Pardon me for speaking plainly. When you say that he is all that stands between you and starvation, you forget that if he should lose his life in a fire the city of Hobart will take care of you and your children the rest of your lives."

"Doctor, I wouldn't give his life for the whole city of Hobart. Not for a million dollars a year would I give him up."

"I understand you, madam. You are a true mother, and you are full of true mother love, but don't forget that there are other mothers whose children have been saved to them by this brave boy here. Surely you will not object to his doing that sort of work for other mothers."

That was too much for Ned's mother. She burst into tears and began wringing her hands.

"Calm yourself, Mrs. Blaze. You magnify his danger beyond all reason. No fireman has ever lost his life in Hobart yet."

"No," she replied, suddenly checking her tears; "it's because none of the firemen have risked their lives as my Ned has."

"Hold up, there, mother," exclaimed Ned. "You ought to have seen the other firemen last night. They exposed themselves just as much as I did. Just a little burn here and there doesn't amount to anything. I've known you to scald your hand, or burn it in the kitchen, many a time, and you never threatened to stop cooking a meal."

The doctor laughed and said:

"Mrs. Blaze, I had just set down to breakfast when your daughter called for me, and I hastened away after emptying a small cup of coffee, so I will hurry back home and call again this afternoon."

"Doctor," said Mollie, who had just come in from the dining-room, "we have breakfast on the table. Please come in and finish your breakfast with us."

"Bless your dear heart, I will."

They had toast and tea and bacon and eggs.

Mrs. Blaze was a little bit disposed to apologize for her breakfast.

"Not a word, madam! Not a word!" said the doctor. "Nobody is entitled to a better breakfast than this is, no matter how much of this world's goods he has. Tea and toast and eggs and bacon are a breakfast fit for a king."

"That's what I think, too, doctor," said Mollie, who was

a model little housekeeper, although she was not yet sixteen years old.

He looked across the table at her, and asked:

"Did you cook this breakfast?"

"Yes, sir. Mother has been attending brother ever since she got up this morning."

"Well, let me tell you, dear, that there are very few young girls who could get such a breakfast as this ready. You seem to be like your brother—whatever you have to do you do it well."

Mollie blushed and seemed to feel very proud, for Dr. Hepworth was a physician who practised among only the wealthy people of the city, and was considered a man of means himself.

His wife and daughter rode in a fine carriage nearly every day and to church on Sundays.

"Doctor," said Mrs. Blaze, "my children are always ready to lend me a helping hand. Mollie can cook any sort of a meal as well as I can, for she has been the only help in the kitchen that I've ever had."

"Madam, it is an accomplishment that she ought to be proud of. I pity the man whose wife can't, when an emergency arises, go into the kitchen and fix up a dainty little meal like this; yet I know a score of families in Hobart, who, if the servants should leave them suddenly, they would have to go out to a restaurant for their meals. There are some mothers of families in Hobart who can't boil water without burning it, figuratively speaking."

"Oh, my!" laughed little Elsie. "I didn't know you could burn water."

"Well, dear, you can't, but do you know water can burn little girls' fingers?"

"Indeed I do! I've scalded my fingers many a time."

"Well, haven't you found out yet how to avoid such accidents?"

"Yes, sir. If one is always careful and cautious and keeps her fingers out of hot water she won't be scalded."

"My dear, that is a great big chunk of wisdom," the doctor laughed. "Now, when I hear of any ladies bragging about what they can do in the way of cooking I'm going to remind them of your sister's splendid breakfast."

"Why, doctor," said Mollie, "this isn't a splendid breakfast. It's one of the plainest kind of meals."

"Listen to me, my dear. It isn't the cook who can make the finest cake and all sorts of dainties, jellies and things of that kind, that is the best one, for it isn't what the stomach craves and lives on. It's only the good cooks who can fry a slice of bacon exactly right, and not one cook in ten can scramble an egg just as it ought to be. They'll have it either underdone or overdone; but to get it just right requires skill and good judgment. It is the daily meals that ruin the digestion of the average man. I see the effect of poor cooking in my practise every day in the year. Here you've cooked this bacon and these eggs exactly right, and if you had to live on them all the time it wouldn't hurt you."

"Look here, you folks in there make me hungry," Ned called out from his bedroom.

"Brother, I'll bring your breakfast in there to you in a few minutes," Mollie called back to him, "provided the doctor says you can have it."

"Let him have all he can eat," said the doctor, "for he hasn't been swallowing any more fire."

Pretty soon after that the doctor left the house, leaving behind him the impression on the minds of the widow and her two daughters that he was one of the nicest men who ever lived.

"Well, he is a wonderful physician," said Ned, "for that stuff he put on my arms is as soothing as cream is to a cat. The pain has nearly all left, and I'm going to get up and dress."

"You stay where you are, Ned," said his mother. "Don't try to be too smart."

"Well, he didn't tell me to stay here in bed all the time."

"No; but you don't want to be moving about until those blister spots are healed. You know the skin will come off if you should rub against any hard substance."

While they were talking to Ned after the doctor left they heard raps on the front door.

Mrs. Blaze herself responded.

She found a middle-aged gentleman standing there.

"Madam, are you Ned Blaze's mother?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," and she held the door wide open.

"Well, my name is Mitchell, whose house was burned down last night."

"I'm awful sorry to hear it, sir. My Ned was burned, too, and the doctor has just left him."

"Good heavens, madam! I didn't know that he was hurt. He saved the life of my eldest daughter when there was no possible hope of rescue for her, and I called to thank him. May I see him?"

"Yes, sir; he is lying in bed. Both of his legs have been pretty badly burned," and she led the way into Ned's room, where he shook hands with the young fireman, saying:

"Young man, you saved my daughter's life last night, and she has sent me out thus early to thank you and tell you that she will be grateful to you all her life."

"Thank you, sir," said Ned. "She was in a pretty tight place. Did she get hurt?"

"No; only the shock to her system. She will come to see you herself just as soon as she can pull herself together," and while he was talking Mr. Mitchell looked around the room and saw Ned's burned trousers hanging on the foot of the bed. He seized and held them up, looking at them in silence for a minute or two.

"This tells the story," he remarked.

"Yes," laughed Ned; "and it tells a hot one, too."

"Well, I've a little story to tell that isn't so hot! When you get up from here go down to Markham's clothing store and tell them to measure you for half a dozen suits of clothes, coats, vests and trousers, and charge them to George Mitchell."

"Thank you, but I won't do that, Mr. Mitchell."

"All right; I'll go there and tell them to send a man down here and take your measurements and make up and send you half a dozen suits; and, madam, a wagon will come around here this afternoon, and don't you object to letting them put in anything it has in it. Neither you nor your son have any right to object to another one's exercising his feelings of gratitude; and as for you, young man, when my daughter and her mother will get hold of you, you want to show wisdom by letting them have their own way."

"Oh, well, if you set the women on me, that takes all the fight out of me," said Ned.

"That's right. You've learned a lesson quite early in life. I sometimes have to fight them myself, but I get the worst of it every time."

CHAPTER X.

NED BLAZE'S BEAUTIFUL VISITOR.

Mr. Mitchell was one of the wealthy men of Hobart.

His eldest daughter, Lena, was considered one of the reigning beauties of Hobart society. She was a girl of great nerve, and very often gave way to sudden impulses. She would take up a hobby and follow it to the extreme, and her girl friends would follow in her lead.

She had never seen Ned Blaze in her life to know him, but had heard so much said about the brave young fireman's daring rescue of little Jessie Russell that she evolved a hero out of him in her imagination.

When she found herself in danger of being burned to death in the ruins of her home, and looked down at the firemen doing their best to rescue the other members of her family, her thoughts reverted naturally to the brave young fireman, and in her terror she called him by name.

Many hundred spectators heard her, and naturally every one thought she had recognized him among the firemen and called him by name to save her.

As the reader knows, he did save her, and at the imminent risk of his own life.

On the next morning, in the home of their next-door neighbor, she insisted that her father should go to Ned Blaze's cottage home and thank him in her name, which he promptly did like the obedient father that he was.

Mrs. Mitchell was built up differently mentally. She was a large stout woman, but lacking in the strong mentality of her beautiful daughter.

She gave a half dozen firemen all the trouble they wanted, but Lena was the reverse of that. She obeyed every order the young fireman gave her, and when her feet touched the ground she, womanlike, gave way and sank in a deathlike swoon.

Of course, nearly the entire wardrobe of the family was destroyed, but two intimate friends, girls about her own size, placed their personal apparel at Lena's disposal.

As quickly as she could do so she dressed herself becomingly, and called for her carriage.

Her mother was utterly unable to accompany her anywhere the next day, and for several days afterward, because her nervous system had not recovered from the shock.

It was about noon when the Mitchells carriage stopped in front of the Widow Blaze's cottage.

The driver had to inquire of several people where it was before he succeeded in finding it.

Lena was admitted by the widow herself.

"Are you Mrs. Blaze?" she inquired.

"Yes, m'ls."

"Well, I'm Lena Mitchell. I suppose you have learned all about what happened last night?"

"Yes; come in."

"Thank you. I want to see Ned Blaze."

"Well, he is in his room. I will tell him. Please be seated," but instead of taking a chair the young lady stopped her, and said:

"Mrs. Blaze, let me kiss the mother of such a brave young man," and with that she threw her arms around the widow's neck and kissed her on both cheeks.

Just then little Elsie came in, and Miss Mitchell, looking at her, asked:

"Is she Ned's sister?"

"Yes; she is my youngest daughter. I have three children."

She caught the little twelve-year-old girl in her arms and kissed her all over her face, very much to Elsie's surprise.

"Dear," said the beauty, "do you know that your brother saved my life last night?"

"Oh, you are Miss Mitchell, are you? He told us about it, and he was awfully burned, too."

"I'm so sorry to hear that, dear. He did not let me get a scorch. You are proud of having such a brother, are you not?"

"Yes; we are all proud of him, and we all love him, too."

"Well, you must let others love him, also."

While she was talking with Elsie, Mrs. Blaze went in to tell Ned who the visitor was.

"Oh, thunder! Let me have my Sunday trousers. I must get up."

"Ned, can you stand the pain of wearing Sunday trousers?"

"Yes, of course I can."

She got out his best suit of clothes, laid them on the foot of the bed for him and left the room to inform Miss Mitchell that Ned was dressing and would soon come out.

Then they talked for nearly a half hour while Ned was dressing.

She fairly won little Elsie's heart, and Mrs. Blaze was more than delighted with her.

She heard a great deal about the society beauty, but had never met her before.

She found that the young lady had a large streak of humor in her mental composition, for she was forced to laugh several times at her descriptions of how her big, corpulent mother gave the firemen all the work they could do to get her out of the window and down the ladder.

"Mother was always a big baby," she laughed, "and as good-hearted as a baby, too, but she is completely prostrated from the shock."

"She didn't get burned, did she?" Elsie inquired.

"No, dear; but she was braised a good deal, for the men were compelled to tie a rope around her and use her roughly, because they couldn't make her understand what to do."

Just then Ned entered the room dressed in his best suit of clothes.

Miss Mitchell rose to her feet and confronted him, and for a couple of minutes looked him straight in the eyes without uttering a word.

Then she said:

"Ned Blaze, I called you last night in my extremity, and, like a true, brave man, you came to me. As you started you sang out: 'Yes, I will, or die trying!' Those words have been ringing in my ears ever since. Now I want to see you open your arms and hear you say, 'Lena, come to me!'"

Ned was embarrassed. His face flushed. The thought flashed instantly through his mind that she was an impulsive, sentimental young lady; but, nevertheless, he held out his arms, and said:

"Lena, come to me!"

She rushed into his arms, threw hers around his neck, and kissed him several times.

Mrs. Blaze looked on, very much surprised, yet tears were trickling down her cheeks.

She expected to see the girl show her gratitude, but not in such a way.

Ned folded her in his arms, and held her tightly to his breast for a few brief moments, thinking that that was what was required of him.

Then he released her, and her arms fell away from around his neck.

"Ned," she said, "I owe you my life, and I don't know how such a debt can ever be paid except with life itself."

"Well, Miss Mitchell, I assure you that I am happier than I can say at seeing you unhurt. Please be seated."

"Ned, don't you ever Miss Mitchell me again. My name is Lena Mitchell," and she stood there looking him straight in the face again, as if trying to read his every thought.

Again Ned said to her:

"Please be seated," and she dropped down in an arm-chair, and continued gazing at him.

He stood there before her talking with her when Mollie, the eldest daughter, came in from a visit to the grocer. She had two paper bags of purchases she had just made.

"Mollie, this is Miss Mitchell, who has come to see us," said Ned.

Mollie made a very pretty courtesy and passed on to the dining-room, saying:

"Excuse me. I'll return in a minute."

"What a sweet face she has," said Miss Mitchell.

"Yes, and she is as sweet a girl as ever lived," Ned replied; "and a better sister no fellow ever had."

Mollie returned, having laid aside her hat and the packages.

The visitor sprang up, and caught her in her arms, and kissed her.

"You didn't get hurt, did you?" Mollie asked as soon as she was released.

"No, thanks to your noble brother, unless a terrible fright can hurt one."

"Oh, I've heard of people being frightened to death," Mollie laughed.

"So have I; but while that was the worst fright of my life, I don't feel any ill effects from it to-day."

The widow and the two daughters were seated, but Ned was standing.

"Why don't you sit down, Ned?" Miss Mitchell asked.

"I beg your pardon," he replied, "but the doctor's instructions are that I must stand up for a few days."

A look of pain swept over the young lady's face, and impulsively little Elsie remarked:

"Oh, he can't sit down. He was too badly burned last night."

CHAPTER XI.

THE GRATITUDE OF THE MITCHELLS.

Elsie's mother laughed in spite of herself at the child's explanation, and Ned and Mollie seemed just a bit confused.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" exclaimed the young lady, rising to her feet and facing him, asking:

"Are you suffering any pain?"

"Very little, indeed. I assure you. Dr. Hepworth was here very early this morning, and I must say that he is a splendid physician. He says I'll be all right in just a few days."

"Yes; he is a good physician. He has been our family physician for three years. He was out to see mother after he left here, and congratulated both of us on our escape from injury."

"Well, the house is ruined and will have to be rebuilt, I guess."

"Oh, yes! Father will have it rebuilt right away. We are going to a hotel to live until it is finished, unless we can rent a suitable house."

"Well, I hope he'll build a good brick house. It's an awful thing on the firemen that ninety per cent. of all the houses in Hobart are frame, which burn like shavings when a fire gets started. Had the house been a brick one we could have confined the fire to just two or three rooms. I very much fear that some night, when there is a high wind blowing, a fire will break out and destroy a third or a half of the houses in the town."

"Yes," said his mother. "I've been trying to persuade him to resign from the fire company, but he won't do it, and Dr. Hepworth backs him up, too, against his mother."

Miss Mitchell turned and looked him full in the face, as if wondering what he would say to that.

Said he:

"Mother's anxiety causes her to forget everything but the peril to which firemen are sometimes exposed. To leave the fire company because of what has happened would be an act of cowardice. I once read of where a soldier in the ranks said to his captain, when he was ordered to do a thing that meant certain death, that he would rather be

a live coward than a dead hero. Now, I don't consider that I am any more likely to be killed at a fire than I am to be run over by a runaway team in the streets. People are liable to get killed at any time by accidents and queer happenings. If I saw another in danger I could no more resist the temptation to try to render assistance than I could take wings and fly."

"I knew that was just what you were going to say," said Miss Mitchell, "because it was your own true self that spoke then; but be kind to your mother on account of her anxiety."

"Oh, he was never anything else but kind to his mother and sisters," said his mother. "He has always been a good son and a good brother."

"That he has," put in Mollie. "No sister ever had a better, truer or more noble brother than I have."

Quick as a flash Lena Mitchell caught Mollie's hand in hers and looked at it. It was a pretty, shapely little hand, with nothing to adorn it but a thin, plain gold ring.

She deliberately took a diamond ring from her own finger and slipped it on Mollie's finger that was encircled by the plain gold band.

"There, dear. That's for the girl who is proud of and loves her brother."

Mollie's eyes opened wide. It was a splendid ring, worth anywhere between three and four hundred dollars, and the gem sparkled and flashed in the light that came through the window near which they were standing.

"Oh, my!" she gasped. "It wouldn't do for me to wear such a ring as that, Miss Mitchell."

"Yes, it will, dear. I want you to wear it for your brother's sake, for my sake and for your own sake. Ned says you are a good sister, and you say he is a good brother, and I want to show you how much I appreciate a brother and sister who love each other that way," and with that she kissed Mollie several times.

"Now, Miss Mitchell," said Ned, but before he could finish the sentence she turned quickly on him, and said:

"Are you speaking to me or to Lena?"

"I beg your pardon," he laughed.

"Granted," she smiled, "on condition that you let me have my own way. Mother and father, perhaps, would tell you that I'm a spoiled child, being the first in the family; but if to be grateful and follow the impulses of the heart spoils any one, then I am spoiled, but I don't believe it. You have petted your two sisters, and it has not spoiled them. Your mother and sisters have petted you, and you are not spoiled. It's all talk. I'm going to love and appreciate the entire Blaze family, for I've never before come in contact with a family that love each other as you all do here. In all the families that I visit I see and hear of quarrels among them now and then. Sometimes we have little scraps in our own home."

"We never have them," put in little Elsie. "We love each other too much for that."

"That's right, dear. I wish you and your sister were my sisters, too."

Mrs. Blaze opened her eyes wide, as she looked at Ned, who seemed to be almost like one in a dream.

Lena Mitchell was indeed a very beautiful young lady. He had seen her in her carriage going through the streets of Hobart a number of times, but never knew who she was, and here she was talking freely like an old friend with his mother, sisters and himself.

There were other diamonds on her fingers, besides big diamond pendants in her ears.

She came up to the full standard of his ideal of beauty.

Suddenly Miss Mitchell rose to her feet, and said:

"I must go now," and turning to the widow, asked:

"Will you let me come and see you all again?"

"Yes, dear; we would be proud to have you do so."

"Oh, say you would be glad to have me call—glad to see me."

"Of course we will."

"Well, be glad to see me as a loving friend, for I want to look upon every one of you as my dearest friend," and with that she threw her arms around the widow's neck and kissed her.

Then she kissed Mollie and Elsie, after which she extended her hand to Ned and looked him straight in the eyes as he held it in his.

Ned wondered if she expected him to kiss her.

She was one who feared to be considered forward or presumptuous.

He compromised with himself by bending over her hand and pressing it to his lips.

She changed color a little, and said:

"I'll come again soon," and with that she passed out of the cottage and entered the carriage.

"What do you think of her, Ned?" Mrs. Blaze asked.

"She is very beautiful, mother."

"Yes, and very impulsive. The novelty will soon wear off."

"Indeed, it won't, mother," said Mollie. "She means everything she says, and I'm really in love with her."

"So am I," put in Elsie, as she seized Mollie's hand and gazed at the magnificent gem that was sparkling on her finger.

Miss Mitchell had not been gone a half hour when a grocer's wagon came up and stopped in front of the cottage.

The driver ran up and knocked at the front door.

"Mrs. Blaze," said he, "there are some things in the wagon from the store for you."

"I haven't ordered anything," she replied.

"I don't know anything about that, madam, but my boss told me to leave them here."

"What is it?" she asked.

"A harrel of flour, a barrel of sugar, a cady of tea, a tub of butter and several cases of canned goods."

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed. "What shall I do about it, Ned?"

"Mother, we can't offend our friends. Let him put them in."

"That's a level head you've got," said the driver, who was acquainted with him. "I don't mind telling you that Mr. Mitchell ordered them to be sent out, and let me tell you that you have paid for them a hundred times over, so don't you do any kicking about it," and he went back to his wagon, and, with his helper, began taking out the things.

The pantry of the little cottage would not hold them all, so after it was filled others were piled up in a corner of the kitchen.

Mrs. Blaze dropped into a chair and burst into tears.

"Mother," said Mollie, "it's nothing but right. The firemen are not paid any salaries here in Hobart, except the engineer, the one who takes care of the engine. Mr. Mitchell wants to make up for brother's lost time from his work on account of his injuries."

"Yes, yes! I know that, but I don't want your brother to earn a living for us by risking his life."

"Mother, don't sing that song any more," put in Ned. "If I don't risk my life with the other firemen, others will, and Ned Blaze will be called a coward; and that's something I won't stand. These things have been sent to us unasked, so don't make any objections."

"Why, they've sent us enough to last three months," said his mother.

"That's all right. Three months or three days, the principle is just the same. Mr. Mitchell would gladly have given his entire fortune to save his daughter, and so would any one else. Of course one can't charge for such things."

CHAPTER XII.

NED MAKES ANOTHER RESCUE.

Dr. Hepworth came at the end of the day to see how his patient was getting on.

"You are doing all right, my boy," he said, later examining the burns on Ned's legs.

"Well, I hope so, and I assure you I feel very grateful to you, doctor, for I know what a burn is. Unless you can get the fire out it does mischief."

"Indeed, it does. Just have that lotion applied often enough to keep the bandage wet with it, and you'll get over it much sooner than you expect."

"Well, can you tell me how long it will be before I can sit down and feel comfortable?"

"No," said the doctor. "You are to be the judge of that yourself."

"Well, it is as bad as prohibiting a girl from talking. There are times when a fellow wants to sit down and feel comfortable."

"Yes; we are all built that way. I was talking with one of the members of your company to-day, and he told me that you had swallowed smoke enough last night to inflate a balloon."

"Yes, I guess I did, but it wasn't very hot. I didn't happen to get hold of any fire that time."

"Lucky! Lucky! But didn't it strangle you some?"

"Yes, I would have fallen had I not stuck my head out of the window and got my nose out of the draft of smoke

that rushed past me, and Miss Mitchell did the same thing, and, by the way, doctor, that young lady knows a thing or two. When I got to her she was as quiet as a lamb, did no screaming, and assisted me in getting her out. I never saw or heard of a woman doing that way before. Her mother gave the other firemen a regular circus. She beat the clown and the entire band thrown in."

The doctor laughed, and said:

"It seems to me that you enjoy the racket, Ned."

"Yes, I do feel good over it. It's enough to make a fellow feel good when he thinks he has saved a life."

"Doctor, Miss Mitchell came here about noon to-day," said Mrs. Blaze, "and presented a splendid diamond ring to my eldest daughter."

"Did she? I'm glad to hear it. She's a big-hearted, impulsive young lady, and has a will of her own. Once when she was very ill I had to administer some very nauseous medicine to her. I never could persuade her to take the second dose of it. She told me if I couldn't give her something more pleasant than that to take she preferred to die."

"By George!" laughed Ned. "It wasn't as bad as that dose you gave me when I swallowed the fire, was it?"

"No, not half so bad; but look here, my boy, she's not a bad dose herself. What's the matter with your taking her?"

"Now, doctor," protested Mrs. Blaze, "don't go to putting fool notions into Ned's head. He has got enough of them now, and one of them is that fire can't kill him."

"Mother, is that so? Have I got that notion? If I have, I don't know it, and I thought I knew myself pretty well."

At that instant the alarm of fire was heard, announcing a conflagration in the second district.

Quick as a flash Mrs. Blaze sprang up, shut the front door, turned the key in the lock, and cried out:

"Catch him, doctor. Don't let him get out."

Ned bolted through an open window at the other end of the cottage, and went flying down the street bare-headed and wearing his best suit of clothes.

The doctor sternly called to him:

"Come back! Come back, Ned!" but Ned was running at the top of his speed.

It was not so very far from his home to the second district, and he reached the fire ahead of the engine.

It was in the home of a workingman with a big lot of children.

He found the wife and mother making frantic efforts to save her household effects.

She had run out into the yard, deposited her baby on the ground, with the other children to take care of it.

It was like all other little homes of workingmen in Hobart—a regular tinder box.

Ned saw the woman's dress was on fire, and he rushed in after her.

She was as strong as he was, and resisted his efforts to take her out.

He seized a blanket on one of the beds, threw it over her head, then seized her around the waist and bore her out in spite of her struggles.

The blanket, of course, prevented her from getting her fingers in his hair.

By the time he got her out into the yard the firemen had arrived.

At first the boys didn't know who he was.

He threw her on the ground and tried to smother the fire on her burning skirt, but that released her hands, and she threw the blanket off her head, and screamed:

"Let me get my things out! Let me get my things out!" and she broke away from him, and dashed into the house again, which was now filled with smoke, and one end of it was in a bright blaze.

"Here, Tom Manley," he yelled, "help me hold her. She's all ablaze now," and with that he dashed right in after her again.

"By George! It's Ned Blaze!" cried the big fireman, dashing in after him.

He found him struggling with the woman inside the house, and at once laid hold of her.

He seized her by the arm, and, being a very strong, muscular fellow, dragged her out, while Ned was behind her pushing.

His coat-tails were blazing, and part of his hair was singed on the back of his head.

"Let me have some of that water!" he yelled, dancing around and trying to throw off his coat.

The nozzleman turned the hose on him.

Ned wheeled around, got the full force of the stream in his mouth and it stretched him flat on his back on the ground.

The next moment the stream was turned on the frantic woman, and her flaming skirts were extinguished; but big Tom Manley had to hold her, for she kept struggling, and wanted to save her things.

Ned picked himself up.

"Good heavens, Ned!" cried Foreman Hackett, "what in thunder are you doing here? You look as if you had been in a fight with a threshing machine; your face is covered with blood."

Ned put up his hand to his face, and taking it away again noticed it was covered with blood. The woman had scratched him like a wildcat.

"Well, she is the worst I ever struck," he remarked.

"Served you right," said Hackett. "You had no business to come out to this fire at all."

"Couldn't help it, foreman. She would have been a dead woman in a minute or two if I hadn't pulled her out. She must be crazy."

Neighbors gathered up the children and took them out of the way of the firemen, and as for the mother, when she found that she was prevented from going back into her burning home, she sat down on the ground and cried only as an excited woman can, declaring that she was ruined and had lost everything.

It was a small, one-story cottage, and the fire was soon extinguished by the clouds of water that had been thrown upon it.

Those of the household goods that were not destroyed by fire were most thoroughly saturated with water.

"Ned," said Foreman Hackett, as soon as he saw the fire was under control, "you want to go right back home now. You came out without your helmet and ruined your coat, and your beauty has been spoiled for some time to come."

"Never had any beauty to lose," said Ned; "but I want to lick that woman's husband for not trimming her nails. I've heard that a woman's finger-nails are as poisonous as a cat's claw, but I hope it is not so."

"Say, Tom Manley, take Ned home, and if he doesn't give his word of honor to stay there, tie him up hard and fast. He says the woman is crazy, but I am inclined to think he is the crazy one," said the foreman.

"Come on, Ned," said brawny Tom Manley, "and if you don't be good I'll strike you."

"All right; here goes!" and he started off home, accompanied by the big fireman.

A crowd of men and boys followed them.

"Look here, Tom," said Ned, running his hand over the back of his head. "I guess I'll have my head shaved, won't I? I'll be hanged if it doesn't feel like a shoebrush back there!"

"Well, if you've lost nothing but a little hair, you'll be all right, Ned."

"Well, I'm not burned anywhere else, but that woman was the worst I ever tackled. Mrs. Mitchell fought you fellows hard last night, but I haven't heard of anybody that was hurt by her. She was simply excited; but that woman fought like a tiger, and for a few moments I thought I had tackled a regular striped Bengal. Her dress was on fire, and she never stopped a moment to try to put it out. She wanted to go in and bring out the cook stove and everything that wouldn't burn. I got her out once, and hanged if she didn't do me and get away from me."

"Don't blame the poor woman, my boy; probably the household effects were not insured, and it was all she had."

"Oh, that's all right; but her finger-nails were as hot as a hornet's sting."

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE BLAZE COTTAGE AFTER THE FIRE

When his mother found that Ned had escaped from her, she turned to Dr. Hepworth, and said:

"Oh, doctor, please don't leave us. He will be sure to come back burned or hurt. If he doesn't leave that fire company I'll go crazy," and she wrung her hands and paced back and forth in the room.

"Madam," said the doctor, "sit down and calm yourself. Ned is a brave youth who can take care of himself and help to take care of others at the same time."

"Oh, I can't be calm, doctor. I just can't stand this strain," and she was shaking from head to foot from sheer nervousness.

"Madam, just sit down. I'll go to the drugstore and will

be back inside of ten minutes," and putting on his hat, he left for the drugstore, which was about three blocks away, where he bought a small bottle of a brown-colored fluid.

Then he returned and administered a dose of it to the anxious mother to quiet her nerves.

It was very effective.

She soon composed herself, and they went out together on the little piazza to look at the dense volume of smoke that ascended above the burning house.

"Why, it isn't so far away!" she remarked.

"No, madam. It is down among those small houses, hence Ned is in no danger, for there are no two-story houses in that quarter. Everybody could run out at the first alarm of fire without waiting for firemen to rescue them."

She instantly saw the force of his remarks, and felt easy in mind about Ned.

In a little while people came by and said that a working-man's little one-story house had been burned down.

"Anybody hurt?" the doctor inquired.

"I guess not," was the reply. "I never heard of any one being hurt. There was a houseful of little children, but the mother got them all out, and the neighbors took charge of them."

By and by a fireman was seen coming some two blocks away down the street.

His red shirt and fireman's helmet were very conspicuous.

He was accompanied by quite a crowd, and alongside of him was a young man with blood-covered face, and in his shirt-sleeves.

"Oh, my!" she cried out. "Somebody has been hurt, after all."

She didn't recognize Ned until he was within fifty feet of the house.

Then she gave a scream, threw up both hands, and fell in a faint on the floor of the little piazza.

Of course the doctor took charge of her at once. He took her in his arms and bore her inside.

"Is that your mother, Ned?" asked Tom Manley.

"Yes; I ought to be horsewhipped for going to that fire. She locked the door on me, and I leaped out through the window."

"What was the matter with you? Did you lose your head?"

"Yes, I guess I did. She called to me to come back, and it was the first time in my life I remember disobeying her. I am not hurt, except a few scratches on my face, and I've lost my Sunday coat."

"And your back hair," put in Tom.

"Yes. I'll have the rest of it cut off, and I'll give a whole lot of it to the woman who tried to pull it all out."

With that they entered the cottage, and there found Elsie and Mollie screaming on account of their mother's swoon.

Ned dashed to her side where she was lying on the sofa.

"What's the matter with her, doctor?"

"Only you, my boy. How did you get your face so badly scratched? Did the house fall down on you?"

"No; but a woman fell on me and clawed me like a mad tiger, just because I tried to save her life."

"All right. I will have you locked up, or chained, after this. You are old enough to know better."

"That's all right, doctor. Abuse me as much as you please. But what's the matter with mother?"

"Nothing but a faint when she saw you coming hatless, coatless, and blood all over your face."

"Well, it is the first time I ever knew her to faint."

"Well, you can blame yourself for it. Now go and wash that blood off your face and let me see what your injuries are."

"Nothing but scratches, doctor; but, tell me, are a woman's finger-nails poisonous?"

"No," and the doctor laughed in spite of himself.

"All right, then," and he went into the kitchen and bathed his face.

Of course the whole front of his shirt was crimson with gore.

The scratches smarted as he applied the water, and he merely pressed the towel against his face instead of rubbing it.

"How is this, doctor?" he asked, as he returned to the room with the towel in his hand.

The doctor examined his face, and found that the woman had scratched his face with her nails pretty well, but no other damage was done.

"You were lucky not to get her fingers in your eyes," he

remarked. "How is it you picked up a fight with a woman instead of with a fire?"

"Oh, I tackled both," he said, and he turned around and showed him the back of his head where all the hair was singed off. "and my best coat is literally burned off me."

"That's all right. You can buy a new coat, and your hair will grow out again," and the doctor at once began clipping off strips of court plaster with a small pair of pocket scissors.

Before he was through with the job Mrs. Blaze recovered consciousness.

The two girls were crying, of course, and there were a half dozen or more nearby neighbors there who had run in to render assistance.

Pretty soon the news came that the name of the unfortunate woman who had been burned out was Sanger, the wife of an honest workingman, and she had lost everything she had in the house, either by fire, or by water, and the fact was mentioned in Ned's hearing.

Mrs. Blaze broke away from the kind women who were around her, and rushing to where Ned was sitting while applying the court-plaster cried out:

"Ned, are you hurt?"

"Only a few scratches in the face, mother, given me by the woman whose life I saved, or was trying to save. She would have been burned to death hadn't big Tom Manley come to my assistance."

Manley was a young man six feet tall and very broad-chested.

"Oh, don't turn it off on me, Ned," said he. "The credit of saving her belongs to you."

"I won't have it," said Ned. "She was too much for me, worse than the fire itself. The fire only got some of my hair and my coat, but she got blood."

"Doctor, is he hurt?" the anxious mother inquired.

"No; only a few scratches, hardly skin deep."

"Well, I would just like to give that woman a dose of her own medicine. The idea of scratching a man's face that way who was trying to save her life."

"Now, mother, don't talk that way," said Ned. "She didn't know what she was doing. She wanted to get her things out when she was on fire herself. I think a collection should be taken up to furnish a home for her again. She's not the only woman who has been frightened out of her senses by a fire."

When the doctor finished plastering his face over he was a comical sight to look at, for he had used black court-plaster, and he looked like an Indian in war paint.

Ned caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror, and said:

"Well, I'm a beauty, ain't I? If some showman would come along and offer me good pay to pose as the Wild Man of Borneo I'd close with him."

No amount of suffering could suppress his humor.

Big Tom Manley burst into a roar of laughter, as did the others in the room, but not a smile appeared on his face or on the faces of his two young sisters.

Night had come on, and the lamps were lighted.

"Now, Ned," said the doctor, "I'm going home. Shall I send a man down here with a padlock and about ten feet of chain to fasten you to your bedpost, or will you give me your word of honor to stay in the house, even though the whole town should be on fire?"

"Doctor, I've got enough for the present," he laughed, "and I'll promise not to run to another fire until I recover entirely from these damages."

"All right, then. Good-night," and the doctor left the house.

Mollie had gone into the kitchen to prepare supper, knowing that her mother was in no condition to do so herself.

"Say, Elsie," Ned called to his youngest sister, "ain't I a beauty?"

Elsie looked at him, and he made a wry face that forced her to laugh in spite of herself.

"Oh, brother," she said, "doesn't it hurt you to sit down?"

"Thunder! I forgot all about that!" and he laughed and arose to his feet.

CHAPTER XIV.

LENA MITCHELL'S PLEDGE TO NED'S MOTHER.

During the evening several of the firemen called at the cottage to see Ned, for they had seen Fireman Manley take him back home, his face covered with blood.

Some of them knew how he had been injured, but the majority did not.

When they saw him they were astonished, for the strips

of black court-plaster on his face disfigured him to such an extent that they were unable to recognize him. His hair had not been cut since it had been singed off of the back of his head clear to the scalp.

"Great Scott, Ned!" exclaimed Foreman Hackett. "you ought to have your picture taken."

"Yes; I was thinking about that," he replied. "I want one for my girl. Then, of course, mother and my sisters will all want a photograph."

"Mr. Hackett," said Mrs. Blake, "how is it that Ned is the only member of the company who gets hurt at a fire?"

"Really, I can't tell you, madam, except that he takes greater chances than any of the rest of us. But we can't stop him. He doesn't do it recklessly, either, I must say, for he has saved a life each time."

"Well, I'm glad that the lives were saved, but it's hard on him, to say nothing of his mother and sisters. Twice, now, he has lost a week's time from his work. I don't mind that, though, for the people have been more than kind to us, but I'm afraid that he will go to a fire once too often."

"Say, boys," put in Ned, "mother is nervous, and I hope you won't think that she really prefers that people shall burn to death in a fire rather than I should risk my life to save them."

"We understand it, my boy," said Hackett. "Your mother is right. You are all she has in the world, and I promise her that hereafter we will try to keep you from running such risks. You shouldn't have gone out this afternoon."

"I couldn't help it," said Ned. "The truth is, my legs just ran away with me when I heard the fire bells, and the result is that I'm feeling worse to-night than ever before. The doctor gave me a scolding, and I guess I deserved it, and I got my punishment, too."

"Yes; I should say you did. I talked with the woman about scratching your face, and she says she has no recollection of doing so."

"Just what I thought; but if you ever see her again, tell her if she doesn't keep her nails trimmed in the next fire we will all let her burn up. It seems to me that her husband ought to keep them trimmed for his own safety."

"Just look at him," said his mother; "the hair on the back of his head singed off, his eyebrows and lashes gone, and he is blistered from his heels almost up to his back."

"Yes," said Hackett, "it is bad enough, and we all sympathize with him."

The firemen went away after a short visit, telling him to go to bed and not permit himself to be disturbed by visitors.

He didn't sleep very well that night, for the scratches on his face pained him a great deal.

The next morning, while he was standing up to eat his breakfast, a man from Mathews' clothing store came in to take his measure for a suit of clothes.

Ned objected.

"Look here, Mr. Blaze," said the tailor. "Mr. Mitchell has ordered a half dozen suits of clothes made for you, and, of course, the store is extremely anxious to fill the order. I don't see why you should object to his paying the bill under the circumstances."

"Well, I'm no object of charity."

"Of course not. It's not a matter of charity at all, but a simple right and justice. If you should be injured in a railroad accident, you would sue the company for damages. Here is a case where the company is willing to make the damages good without being sued, so you see how inconsistent you are when you put up any objection to our filling Mr. Mitchell's order."

"Look here, you missed your calling," said Ned. "You should have been a lawyer."

The tailor laughed, and asked:

"Have I won the case?"

"Yes; go ahead and do your duty."

The tailor took his measure, and as he was leaving the house Ned asked him to go by a barber shop and have a man sent down with a pair of shears.

"All right. I will do so with pleasure."

The barber came and cut his hair on the back of his head. But he had to cut it shorter than he ever had it cut before.

"By George! I look like a prize-fighter!" said Ned, as he looked at his reflection in a mirror.

A couple of hours later a messenger from the clothing store brought in four suits of clothes.

"Say, they were made up in a hurry," said Ned.

"Oh, no! They examined the measurements the tailor got, and they were exactly like these suits that were already

made, and so they were sent down. They are going to make two extra fine suits for Sunday wear."

"All right," and Ned at once put on one of the new suits and found that it fitted him beautifully.

A little later Miss Lena Mitchell called, and when she saw him a look of horror came into her face.

"I am not as handsome as I was," he laughed.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" she exclaimed, laying both hands on his shoulders and looking him in the eyes. "Are you suffering any pain?"

"Not very much. A look at your face makes me forget every injury."

"Ned Blaze, do you mean that, or are you simply flattering me?"

"No, I mean it. It's true, too."

"Then I shall come and see you every day until you are entirely recovered, and I don't care what gossips may say about it. I saw in the papers this morning how your face had been scratched, and your clothes and hair were burned, too, and as soon as I could get out I ordered the carriage. Now, tell me honestly, Ned, don't let modesty or anything stand in the way, can I do anything for your comfort? My entire fortune is at your disposal."

"Bless your dear heart!" he replied. "Your very presence is more to me than all your fortune."

"That's simply the expression of a gallant man," she replied. "It isn't what I want. Gentlemen like to flatter me, and think that I'm pleased with it, but I'm not. I don't like flattery."

"I'm not flattering you, Miss Mitchell."

"Ned, Ned, my name is Lena, and please don't forget it again. Call me by my name just as you would one of your sisters."

"I assure you that I want to do so, but I'm afraid other people will say I'm presuming on circumstances that brought us together."

"Never mind what other people will say. I want you to call me Lena, and know that Lena Mitchell is the best friend you have in the world except your mother and sisters, and understand, too, that as a man I admire you more than any man I ever met in my life, because I have found manly qualities in you that are worthy of admiration."

"Thank you! I don't know what to say. You, too, have qualities and traits that I admire, even more than your beauty."

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear you say that; but you haven't told me yet if I can do anything for your comfort."

"Nothing more than what you are doing now, permitting me to look at you and talk to you, for I assure you that it is a great comfort to me to do so."

"Then talk to me and look at me as much as you please. I assure you that I enjoy being with you more than with any gentleman I know. When you get well of your injuries I want you to come and see me of evenings. I will play and sing for you."

"Thank you! Thank you! But how the gossips would talk."

"Let them talk. It's our business, and not theirs. I can stand it, and you can, too."

"I can stand anything but subjecting you to the merciless tongues of gossips."

"Well, they can't hurt me, or you, either, and we can't stop people from talking."

"No, not unless you cut their heads off."

"Well, you can't cut people's heads off in this age."

"Miss Mitchell," said the widow. "I wish you would exact a promise from him to resign from the fire company, for I live in constant dread of his being killed at some fire."

The young lady looked at the mother in silence for a minute or so, and then said:

"He will never be killed that way, Mrs. Blaze. It would be an act of heartlessness to ask him to stop saving the lives of other people after he had saved mine."

"That's it! That's it!" said Ned. "And now, mother, I will promise you that in the future I shall exercise more care than heretofore. I know full well what your anxiety is. I know what my life is worth to you, and I intend to devote it entirely to you as long as you are dependent upon me for a support, and at the same time do my duty as a fireman, as well as a citizen."

"Mrs. Blaze," spoke up Miss Mitchell very promptly, "if Ned should ever be taken away from you by death in any manner, I'll take his place as your support, to which I pledge you my word of honor. So far as support is concerned, you would never miss him."

The widow was astonished, and her heart was touched.

"Oh, I thank you ever so much, from the bottom of my very soul!" she exclaimed. "It isn't that I am thinking about so much, but my son, my first born."

CHAPTER XV.

"WHAT DID YOU DO WITH MY COAT?"

To say that Ned Blaze's heart was touched by the pledge Miss Mitchell had given his mother would be but a feeble way of expressing what he felt. He seized her hand and pressed it to his lips, saying:

"Lena Mitchell, there are few young ladies living who have such a heart as yours."

"Indeed, I hope not. No mother or sister of a man who saved my life when it was beyond all hope shall ever lack for the comfort of life. I have a fortune in my own right, and am not dependent upon my father's fortune for my future support; hence you see I am able to make good my promise. I shall be a sister to your sisters and as a daughter to your mother. It is not a promise to be forgotten, no matter what may come to either or all of us in the future."

"Heaven bless you for that!" he replied, kissing her hand; "but as long as I live and have health and strength she will not lack for a support."

"I know that well enough, and so does everybody who knows you; but for her sake let me beg you to be careful of your life. It's a duty you owe your mother. I have heard it said that you bear a charmed life, and I really believe it; yet you should never tempt fate on account of it."

"I promise all that," said he.

"Well, I want you to promise me another thing; that you will accept a position that my father will procure for you. You are working in one of the mills. Father has promised me that he would try to get a position for you that will pay you a great deal more than you now receive."

"Thank you! I promise that readily. It would be foolish for any one to refuse an advancement in his future prospects."

After a little more talk she went away.

"There, mother," said Ned, "you see that good will come out of all this trouble."

"Yes, I hope so. You really are entitled to it, for you have paid dearly for the friendship you have won. I really love the young lady; but it is hard for me to realize that she will always remain in her present frame of mind."

"Mother, I believe implicitly in her good faith and firmness. She has great determination."

During the day Ned learned from a friend who called on him that a subscription for the benefit of the poor working-man whose household effects had been lost in the fire was being taken up.

"By George, I'm glad to hear that!" he said. "I wish I was able to contribute to the fund myself. I'll buy a pair of scissors and send them to her if she'll promise to keep her nails trimmed hereafter."

Days and weeks passed, and Ned gradually recovered from his injuries.

No other fires occurred, and Ned returned to his work in the mill, but the foreman told him that he had been compelled to put another man in his place, and that he would have to wait until an opening or a vacancy occurred.

"Well, I'm sorry for that," said Ned.

"The boss said he couldn't afford to keep the place open for you; his business required the work in that department should be done."

"Well, am I to consider myself discharged?" he inquired.

"No; I wasn't instructed to discharge you at all, but simply to put another man in your place and keep him there, and to find other work for you, if possible."

Ned returned home considerably downhearted, and reported to his mother that he had lost his position in the mill on account of his absence from work.

"I was afraid of it, Ned," said his mother, "but then we have provisions enough in the house to last three or four months. You see what being a fireman has done for you."

"Yes; it has brought in all the provisions we now have in the house."

"Well, take my advice, and resign from the company."

Ned made no reply, but after a little while remarked that he would go out and see if he could find a situation anywhere.

He was about to leave when the Mitchell carriage stopped in front of the door, and Lena Mitchell alighted from it.

"Why, Ned, I thought you were at the mill. I was just going to drop in to see your mother."

"I went to the mill this morning, and found that I had lost my place."

"What!" she gasped. "Were you discharged?"

"No, but another man was in my place, and there was no place for me. Practically it amounts to a discharge; but don't I wouldn't put the other fellow out, even if I had been permitted to do so, for he probably needs work as much as I do."

"What are you going to do now?"

"Hunt for another place."

"Get in the carriage here with me, Ned, and we will go to father's office."

He tried to object, but she wouldn't permit him to do so.

He took his seat by her side in the carriage.

"Ned," she said, "I am really glad that you were discharged from the mill. You are entitled to a better position than that of a mill hand."

"Thank you! I would be glad to get a better position if I could. Any man would."

"Yes; if he has any ambition, and I know you have plenty of that. I have, too. Now, you just let father and I manage it for you."

They had gone about half-way to Mr. Mitchell's office when the fire alarm bell announced a fire in the first district.

Quick as a flash Ned reached out for the carriage door.

"No, no! You stay here with me," she exclaimed, seizing him by the collar of the coat.

He tried to pull loose from her, and on seeing that she had a pretty strong grip he threw off his coat and left it in her hand. The next instant he was off, running at full speed in the direction of the quarters of the fire company.

When he reached there the engine and boys had gone, but he seized a fireman's helmet and ran at the top of his speed in the direction of the fire.

It was a private residence, an old frame building that had been standing for thirty years or more.

All the inmates had escaped, and he was not called upon to do anything extraordinary. He assisted the other firemen, though, in fighting the flames, and stuck to the work until the blaze was extinguished.

When he returned home to change his clothes he found the Mitchell carriage in front of the cottage.

He had worked with his coat off; hence when he entered the door the first thing he said was:

"What did you do with my coat?"

"Why, I brought it home to your mother," Miss Mitchell laughed. "Don't you feel ashamed of yourself for deserting a young lady on the street that way?"

"No; I can't say that I do, for the young lady is sensible enough to recognize the fact that I was doing my duty."

"That's so. I didn't blame you in the least. Now, tell me, what did you do at the fire?"

"Why, I helped the boys as well as I could. No lives were in danger; hence there was no necessity of my going inside the house. It was a dwelling over on Flint street. So you see I kept my promise to both you and mother."

"Well, what would you have done if somebody had appeared at a window begging you for help?"

"I would have rendered what help I could, of course. And so would the other firemen."

"Of course you would," put in his mother. "You would have gone right through the fire to save any one in danger."

"Yes; but I would have selected the easiest way to give the assistance. You can see that I had a good deal of water thrown on me, and the dust rather spoiled my clothes for the day; so if you will excuse me I will make a change."

"Go ahead," said Miss Mitchell. "I will wait for you, for I want you to take a ride with me."

He went to his room, and half an hour later rejoined his mother and Miss Mitchell in the sitting-room.

"I don't know whether we can find father in his office now or not," said the young lady; "but we will see, anyway; so come on out to the carriage."

He put on his hat and went out to the carriage with her, assisted her in and took a seat beside her.

She ordered the driver to drive to her father's office, and, as she half expected, he was not in.

She then suggested that they take a drive along the river road.

Of course he made no objection, and they soon passed beyond the town limits for a drive over the splendid road along the river bank.

About a mile and a half beyond the town limits was a

large stone quarry, where many workmen were getting out stones for the foundation of a public school building in the first ward of Hobart.

Just as they were passing the place a blast went off with a report like that of a cannon, and a shower of stone fell all around the carriage. The horses were panic-stricken, and at once made a break. The driver lost control of them, but he tugged at the lines with such tremendous force as to turn the horses' heads toward the river, when he really intended to turn them the other way. The next moment they sprang into the water, where they at once sank out of sight.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE RIVER.

The water was deep where the horses plunged in, and the two splendid animals sank out of sight.

The driver was thrown from his seat and fell headforemost between the two horses.

The doors of the carriage were closed, but the sashes were down and the water immediately filled it.

Lena Mitchell screamed with horror at the sudden catastrophe. For a brief moment Ned himself was dumfounded, but he didn't lose his presence of mind.

The plunging horses kept the vehicle shaking, but he threw open the door next to himself, climbed out, pulling the young lady by the hand.

She couldn't swim, but he could.

They were pretty close to the river bank, but somehow or other, in her struggles she kept him for a time from reaching it.

She swallowed a good deal of water.

Finally he got his left arm around her waist, and managed to reach the bank, but found it so steep he couldn't climb out of the water with her.

Several quarrymen, seeing what had happened, ran to the spot, and five of them clasped hands; while one of them reached out and got hold of Ned's hand, and thus he was pulled ashore.

Miss Mitchell was hysterical, and added to that was the great quantity of water she had swallowed, which, of course, made her feel quite sick.

Ned caught her around the waist and held her up, at the same time calling to the quarrymen:

"Save the driver," but that unfortunate individual was never seen alive again, for when he plunged forward between the two horses, the struggling animals managed to keep him under until he was drowned.

It was a sudden and terrible tragedy.

Seeing that the men hesitated to plunge into the water, which the struggling animals kept boiling, Ned said to the young lady:

"Sit down, please, and I'll look after the driver."

She obeyed him promptly, and he plunged into the water headforemost.

He found that the steep incline of the bottom had forced the carriage down against the horses to where the depth was at least fifteen feet.

He didn't know what had become of the driver, but he felt around for him.

His ability to stay under water aided him greatly, and he remained out of sight until the quarrymen themselves became alarmed.

"He's drowned! He's drowned!" cried one of them.

It alarmed the young lady, and sick as she was from an overdose of river water, she sprang to her feet and cried out vehemently:

"Save him! Save him! A thousand dollars to the man who saves his life."

Still not one of the quarrymen plunged in after him.

It was learned afterwards that none of them could swim. Suddenly he appeared above the surface and inhaled a long breath.

He looked around and said:

"I couldn't find him."

"Come out! Come out!" Lena called to him; but the next instant he disappeared again, and again she screamed out:

"Save him! Save him!"

After nearly a minute passed Ned's head again appeared above the surface of the water.

He took in a fresh stock of air and again dived.

She was astounded that not one of the quarrymen tendered any assistance.

She screamed out at them:

"You cowards!"

"Miss," said one of the men, "not one of us can swim."

Suddenly Ned reappeared, bearing the unconscious man in his arms.

The top of the carriage was only about two feet or so under the water. He scrambled up on top of it, and was thus enabled to hold the driver's head above the water.

Then a rope was thrown to him by one of the men who had brought it from the quarry.

He quickly tied it around the driver's body, and it was pulled ashore.

Then he swam forward himself and managed to climb out.

The quarrymen did what they could to resuscitate the driver, but he was most thoroughly drowned.

"Here, boys," cried Ned, "one of you run to town for another carriage, and also for a physician," and a quarryman started off towards town on a run.

"Now, boys, it is always understood that to roll a man face downward over a barrel is the best way to get an excess of water out of him. If you haven't a barrel out here one of you get down on your hands and knees and we'll lay him across your back."

A quarryman followed his suggestion, and they worked at him vigorously for half an hour.

In the meantime Miss Mitchell complained of being very, very sick.

Ned suggested to her that she run her finger down her throat and thus give the water a start.

It was an undignified position for a fashionable young lady, but she had plenty of nerve and will power, and followed his suggestion.

She got rid of a good deal of water, and was pretty well recovered when a carriage from a livery-stable and a physician arrived.

Other people came out, too, some on foot and others on horseback, for the excitement had spread all over Hobart.

The doctor at once took charge of the drowned man, and labored with him a good while.

Finally he gave up the job as a useless one.

He suggested to Miss Mitchell that she return home at once.

She was assisted into the carriage, and as she took a seat she looked at Ned and said:

"Come with me, please."

"Excuse me. You are in no danger. I will stay here and help get the carriage out of the water."

"Don't bother about that," she said. "The horses are drowned, and they can take their time in getting the carriage out."

"Well, it is my duty to help in that work."

"Ned Blaze, get in here and go with me," she said, with a great deal of authority in her tone. "Your mother will hear of the accident, and it's your duty to her to let her see you alive and well," and as she spoke she reached out, caught hold of the collar of his coat, and almost pulled him inside of the carriage.

"Miss Mitchell is right," said the doctor. "Go to your mother at once. You may reach there before she hears the news."

Ned yielded, and the carriage was driven back to town at an unusually rapid speed.

"Ned, you have saved my life the second time," said Lena.

"Thank you. I am sorry I couldn't save the driver, too. Somebody at the quarry is to blame for touching off that blast when they certainly must have seen the carriage."

"Please don't blame anybody. Let us be thankful that we both escaped alive."

"Well, I don't wish to blame any one, but certainly somebody was negligent. Vehicles are passing up and down this road every hour in the day, and it is a rule that when a blast is to be made a man should be sent out east and west to stop passersby until after the explosion. Instead of that, they permitted the carriage to get directly alongside of the quarry before the explosion. The blame must rest where it belongs."

Suddenly the young lady burst into tears as the horror of the situation occurred to her.

He tried to soothe her. He put his arm around her waist and pulled her to him. She laid her head on his shoulder and sobbed for a few minutes.

Suddenly she stopped and began accusing herself, saying:

"It was all my fault. I told the driver to drive out this way. I wanted to give you a ride."

"Well, you are not to blame for that, and I insist that you shall not accuse yourself. How could you know that such a thing was possible?"

The next moment he kissed her several times on her lips, saying:

"There! There! Let that put a stop to your blaming yourself. You are in no way to blame, and I just won't let you do so."

Then almost unconsciously he pressed her closer to him and said:

"Lena, I love you with all my heart and soul."

The words had no sooner escaped him than he realized what he had done.

CHAPTER XVII.

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.

On hearing the young fireman say that he loved her, Lena looked up suddenly, gazed steadily into his eyes, and said:

"Ned Blaze, do you mean that?"

"Yes, Lena; but it came from me almost unconsciously. Please don't consider me presumptuous."

"You are not presumptuous. You have made me the happiest girl on earth. I wanted your love, for you have my whole heart. Henceforth I am yours and you are mine," and she seemed to forget everything else but that he loved her.

Of course they met scores of people rushing out to the quarry.

The horses were going at a fast trot, and nobody stopped them to make inquiries.

They both knew that they would learn the truth at the quarry.

Ned called to the driver to take them to the hotel where the Mitchell family was stopping.

"No! No!" she said. "Go to Mrs. Blaze's home."

"Why, don't you suppose your mother will be as uneasy about you as my mother will be about me?" he asked her.

She had her way, and the carriage was driven rapidly to the widow Blaze's home, and there they were fortunate to find that the news of the accident had not reached her.

They went into the cottage in their wet garments.

"Why, what in the world is the matter?" the widow exclaimed when she saw they had been in the water.

"Oh, Mrs. Blaze, father was not in his office, so we took a ride out on the river road," Miss Mitchell explained. "Just as we reached the quarry a blast was let off, and the horses, in a panic, turned and dashed into the river, and the driver and both horses were drowned, and again Ned saved my life, for I couldn't swim. The carriage dived into deep water and took us clear under," and she threw her arms around the widow's neck and kissed her, adding:

"I brought him straight here to you that you might see he was not harmed. Now, I am going home to put on some dry clothing," and with that she hurried out to the carriage and was driven to the hotel where her parents were living.

Ned promptly put on some dry clothing himself, and when he had done so he told his mother all the particulars of the accident.

"I tried to save the driver," he said, "but he had plunged in between the two horses and must have become entangled in the harness. I got him out, though, and Dr. Handy worked with him for a half hour or so, and finally gave it up as a bad job. The poor fellow was dead."

Of course Mrs. Blaze was saved all worry about Ned's life, for the news had not reached her before his return home.

It was a great sensation for Hobart, and the papers were full of the story.

Reporters came to the house to interview Ned and get his version of it.

Also they called on Miss Mitchell at the hotel. The papers blamed the contractor or his men for carelessness in not warning off passersby before setting off the blast.

One quarryman explained that all the workmen rushed out of the way of danger as soon as a fuse was ignited, and that the carriage was right on them before they saw it.

Miss Mitchell's friends crowded the hotel to congratulate her. She had a great many admirers among the eligible young men of Hobart.

They, too, congratulated her, and she said things to them that set them thinking.

She declared that Ned Blaze was the bravest young man she ever knew or heard of, and but for his presence of mind and courage she would have been drowned.

There were two wealthy young men who had been paying her very marked attention, but while she was pleasant to them, they saw that they were not in it with Ned Blaze. He seemed to be her ideal of true manhood, and that a romance was inevitable.

The news was also published that Ned Blaze had lost his position in the mill on account of absence from his work, and a great many very harsh comments were made on the mill owner.

The latter published a card the next morning denying the charge. He stated that the superintendent of the mill had been compelled, by the necessities of the business, to put another man in his place, ending by saying as soon as a place could be made for him it would be given him.

Other business houses at once sent word to Ned that they could give him employment, and before the end of the day a half dozen offers had been submitted to him.

He was trying to make up his mind which to accept, when Lena sent word to him not to take any place until her father could see him.

"Ned," said his mother, "has Lena Mitchell taken entire charge of you?"

"Well, I don't know, mother," he laughed. "She is a pretty level-headed sort of girl, and Mr. Mitchell has a good deal of influence in Hobart. She says he will find me a place with good pay, and that I must not go back to work in the mill again."

She was not blind by any means; so she suspected that if Ned made any advances toward her she would probably meet him half way and accept him if he proposed. But, of course, she said nothing to him about it.

One day Mrs. Mitchell herself, having recovered from the great shock her nervous system had received at the fire, rode up in her carriage, accompanied by Lena, and paid her an hour's visit.

It was the first time that Mrs. Blaze had met her.

The two mothers met, shook hands, and kissed.

Ned was not at home.

"Mrs. Blaze," said Mrs. Mitchell, "isn't it singular that your son should have twice saved the life of my daughter?"

"Yes, indeed! I've thought of it many times, and I've wondered if it was not providential."

"Of course it is! Of course it is! I see the hand of Providence all through it; but I can't understand why the driver and the horses should have been drowned and my daughter's life saved."

"Well, we can't understand the ways of Providence," returned the widow. "My pastor told me the other evening that Providence uses human beings as instruments for good or evil. I certainly know that my son has been an instrument in the hand of Providence in saving the lives of several people."

"Weil, I feel grateful to both Providence and your son. I don't believe that Providence is going to let any harm come to him."

"Well, he has been harmed a good deal," said the widow, "and I'm just frightened nearly to death every time I hear an alarm of fire. They say he bears a charmed life. I hope he does, but I suffer a most terrible suspense all the time on his account."

"I know how you feel," said Mrs. Mitchell, "for I have suffered that way, too. Lena's escape from death has been as marvelous as his, and I assure you that her father and I appreciate him at his true worth. As for Lena here, she has forgotten every subject of conversation and will talk about nothing but brave Ned Blaze."

Lena laughed and said:

"How can I help it? I am not going to stop it, and wouldn't if I could. He has shown that he is willing to risk his life for others, and what greater love can there be than when one is willing to die for another."

Mrs. Blaze looked at her and wondered if she was not speaking thoughtlessly.

Mrs. Mitchell, however, made no particular note of the expression, for she added:

"We are all grateful, and feel that way towards your son, and I hope that you will let us come to see you and be friendly and neighborly. We are going to rebuild our home, and when we move into it we could have no more welcome visitors than you and the members of your family."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Blaze. "We appreciate that very much indeed. But poor people have no place on the visiting list of the rich."

Quick as a flash Lena clapped her hand over the widow's mouth and said:

"Please don't speak that way. Money is money, and true, manly worth is another thing altogether. Money doesn't make true men or true women. It simply provides comforts. There are thousands of honest, manly hearts covered by ragged coats, and I have learned to appreciate a man for what he is

rather than for what he has; and your son has all the qualities that go to make up a grand, magnificent manhood, and for his sake I love his mother and sisters," and she impulsively threw her arms around her neck and kissed her.

Mrs. Blaze was touched deeply. She could not gainsay a single word she had uttered.

In a little while the mother and daughter left the cottage, and drove away in the carriage, which had been hired from the livery-stable.

The Mitchell carriage had been pulled out of the river, and was undergoing repairs and painting. It had been injured very little.

The carcasses of the two horses were turned adrift, and the current bore them past the city towards the sea.

The dead driver was buried at the expense of Mr. Mitchell, and hundreds of people attended the funeral.

He was a single man, and had no one depending on him for support. The minister, in his funeral discourse, eulogized him as a man faithful unto death, saying that he could have saved himself by abandoning his seat and leaving those in the carriage to their fate.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NED BLAZE'S NEW POSITION.

True to his promise, Mr. Mitchell secured a position for Ned in one of the largest mercantile establishments in the city, and at an excellent salary.

Ned knew little or nothing about the business, and frankly admitted the fact to the merchant.

"I understand that thoroughly," said the merchant, "but you can soon learn all about the business. You have a host of friends who will come here to trade to encourage you, and hence I expect to derive benefit from that rather than from your labor until you have mastered the trade."

"Well, I'll do all I can to persuade my friends to trade here," returned Ned, "and I promise furthermore to study the business until I fully understand it."

"Of course! That's what I expect you to do."

"But how about my connection with the fire department?" Ned asked.

"Keep it and do your duty as a fireman. Don't hesitate a moment to run to a fire the moment you hear the alarm. I am not the man to object to any employee of mine doing his duty as a citizen."

"Well, I wish every other business man in Hobart looked at it that way."

"So do I, but sometimes the necessities of business compel them to act differently. You are only a salesman in this store; hence your place can be filled by another; but in a manufacturing concern it is different. Orders have to be filled, and when there is a lack of labor in one department all the other departments must wait for it to catch up."

The Mitchells had rented a house temporarily in which to reside while their new house was being put up, but not once had Ned crossed the threshold of their residence.

One day Lena leaned over the counter and asked in a half whisper why he hadn't been to see her.

"For your own sake," he said. "If I were to pay you just one visit in your home every tongue in Hobart would go to wagging."

"What do you care for that?" she asked. "They are all wagging now and twitting me about your caring nothing for me."

"Do you wish me to call?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed I do."

That very evening Ned, dressed in his best, told his mother he was going to call on Lena Mitchell.

"Ned," said Mrs. Blaze, "that will embarrass her and set the whole town talking."

"I told her that," said he, "but she said she didn't care, and told me to call on her."

The visit to the Mitchell residence was a happy one. He found that the entire family gave him a hearty welcome, and he was left alone with Lena in the parlor, where she played and sang for him for hours.

The next day it was known almost over the entire town that Ned Blaze had visited Lena Mitchell the night before, and there were scores of both sexes who said:

"I told you so. I told you so."

A number of young men organized a new company and elected Ned foreman.

Instantly every member of his company protested, and begged him to remain with them.

"Boys," said he, "I won't leave you. You have stood by me, and I will stand by you as long as I am a fireman."

For a week the new company labored hard to secure him as their foreman, but he was not to be moved from his decision.

"Now, boys," he said to them one evening, "let me suggest a good man to you. I don't know whether you can get him or not, but if you do you will have the right man in the right place. It is simply a matter of sentiment with me to wish to remain with my old companions."

"Elect Tom Manly your foreman, and he will give you all the training you need. He is a good man, a strong man, reliable and fearless."

Ned considered that he owed a debt of gratitude to the big fellow, and he tried to pay it that way.

Tom, like himself, was a workingman, poor, and yet ambitious.

The new company promptly elected him, and Ned advised him to take the position.

"Ned," said he, "I don't wish to leave our boys."

"Neither do I, Tom, but you are a much older man than I am, and it may pave the way for better things. You deserve it and I beg you to take the offer they've made you."

CHAPTER XIX.

NED BLAZE CEASES TO BE A FIREMAN.

Tom Manley, urged by Ned Blaze, accepted the position of foreman of the new fire company, and he set to work with marvelous energy to drill the boys in their duties.

The new company needed uniforms and furnishings for their headquarters, and the ladies of Hobart decided to hold a fair, and wind up with a grand fireman's ball, for the purpose of raising the necessary funds.

Miss Mitchell was the most active of all the ladies of Hobart in the work. She not only drove about the city in her carriage, collecting articles of furniture for the headquarters of the company, but spent money freely in purchasing supplies for the fair.

The fair was a great success, and lasted four days, or rather evenings, and a large sum of money was raised.

On the night of the ball every fireman was in uniform.

Ned danced several times with Lena Mitchell, and also with other ladies of the highest society.

Of course Mrs. Blaze and her two daughters were present. Mrs. Blaze was very nervous of late.

The ball broke up some time after midnight, and Ned escorted his mother and sisters home, leaving Miss Mitchell and her mother to return in their carriage.

Quite a number wondered why Ned himself didn't escort Lena home.

At the next meeting of the fire company Ned rose to his feet and said:

"Mr. Foreman, I've a solemn duty to perform. I am going to sever my connection with the fire department of Hobart."

Instantly his voice was drowned by a howl of protests, and he had to stand there a couple of minutes or so until quiet was restored.

"Now, boys," he continued, "I want you to keep quiet until I am through talking to you. Doctor Hepworth has informed me that it is absolutely necessary for the health of my mother to leave the fire company. She has almost succumbed to nervous prostration, and the doctor informs me that if I don't cease to be a fireman that some time I'll return from a fire to find my mother dead."

Ned handed his resignation to the secretary.

There were tears in the eyes of every fireman. They saw that he was right, and admired his devotion to his mother and sisters.

The resignation was promptly accepted, with expressions of regret, as well as admiration.

After the meeting adjourned the secretary hurried around to the newspaper office, and handed the letter of resignation over for publication.

The next morning the community was startled at the news.

Expressions of admiration were heard on all sides. Men and women at their breakfast tables read it and made comments on it.

Every mother in Hobart seemed to appreciate his devotion to his mother more than his bravest performances in saving lives at fires.

An editorial in the paper approved his course, while at the

same time regretting the loss to the city of the services of such a brave fireman.

Scores and scores of ladies visited the store that day to see him and express their approval of his course.

CHAPTER XX.

"I BEAR A CHARMED LIFE; I CAN SAVE HER!"

Mrs. Blaze rushed up to Ned to kiss him as he came in from the store.

Her nervousness had all disappeared, and she was as happy as a little child with its first doll.

"Oh, you ought to have been at the store to-day!" he laughed. "So many people came in to see me, mother, that I could not begin to count them. I know that at least a dozen mothers kissed me for you."

"Didn't any young ladies kiss you?" Lena asked.

"Not one of them; but they said things to me that were as sweet as kisses, and that all repays me for the sacrifice I have made."

"Ned," Lena asked, "was it really a sacrifice?"

"Yes; I tell you it was a hard thing to do. I did want to stay with the boys and fight the flames and save life and property. It really has a fascination for me; but I do love my mother."

"That's right. You ought to love her, for she is certainly a good mother to you and the girls."

Mrs. Blaze and Mollie insisted on her staying to lunch with them, and she did so.

While they were at the table they were startled by the alarm of the fire bell, which informed the entire city that a fire had started in the second district.

Ned gave a sudden start, dropped his knife and fork, and looked at his mother.

There was an expression in his eyes which seemed to ask for permission to let him dash out and run with the fire boys.

Then he looked at Lena on the other side of the table.

Their eyes met, and for a minute not a word was uttered.

Mollie glanced from one to the other, as if wondering what he would do.

Little Elsie hadn't come in from school, hence the four made up the party.

Suddenly Lena sprang up from her seat, went around and stood behind his chair, wound her arms around his neck, pulled his head backwards, and leaning over, imprinted a kiss on his lips, saying:

"You dear, brave boy! You will not break your promise to your mother. I'll hold you to help you resist the temptation."

Mrs. Blaze shed tears of joy as she sat at the head of the table, and pretty Mollie's eyes filled with tears also.

"Mollie," said Lena, after a few minutes, her arms still around Ned's neck, "your brother and I are going to marry some day, and you and I will be sisters. I love him because he loves his mother, loves me, and twice saved me from certain death."

Mollie had suspected the attachment, but had not been told of the engagement.

She exclaimed:

"Oh, I'm so glad," and she sprang from her chair, and the next moment her arms were around Lena's neck.

This is not a love story, by any means, but a simple narrative of facts in the life of the brave young fireman, which the author thinks the reader should know. To say that the mother and daughter were supremely happy would be simply superfluous.

Mollie had kissed both the lovers in her great joy.

"It's all over with now," said Ned. "I'll never run to another fire as a fireman, for there is a fire in my heart that needs constant looking after, and I don't mean to make any effort to put it out. I want it to burn as long as I live. Love for my mother and my two sisters and you," and he looked Lena straight in the eyes as he spoke.

Lena was as happy as he was, and from that moment she knew that he had the will power to keep his promise to her, for she had read in his eyes long before that she was in complete possession of his heart and mind.

It was learned an hour or two later that two lives had been saved at the fire, one by brave Tom Manley, and another by a member of Ned's old company; but people missed Ned Blaze, and his name was heard on the lips of many.

Ned returned to the store like one in a dream.

"Ned, you didn't run to the fire," one of the clerks said to him as he entered the store.

"No; I'm no longer a fireman, but they had to hold me at

home. I heard the alarm while sitting at the dinner table. It was a trial to me, I can tell you, for I feared that I would be needed by some poor child or other unfortunate."

"Well, you were, but big Tom Manley proved himself a hero, I understand."

"He has always been one," said Ned. "I know the stuff he is made of. I've been shoulder to shoulder with him when our clothes were on fire. That's why I advised the boys of No. 3 to make him their foreman."

The next day after the fire the papers had a glowing description of big Tom Manley's rescue of a little seven-year-old girl, and the city rang with praises of his fearless act.

Ned himself congratulated him.

"Ned, my boy," said Tom, "had you been there you would have gotten ahead of me. I hesitated a while, thinking it was just certain death for me to go in there, but I thought of what I'd seen you do, so I plunged in, and hanged if I know how I got out alive. I got a few burns, but they don't hurt much. I am so glad that I succeeded in saving the child that I actually forget them."

A week later there was another fire down in the fourth district, where several families of mill operatives were crowded in a big tenement building.

It all being of frame, the houses burned almost like pine shavings.

A young girl, a worker in one of the mills, was cut off from all retreat. She appeared at an upper window while all the ladders were at the other windows, and the firemen were saving lives as rapidly as they could.

The young girl stretched out her hands towards the big crowd below, and screamed out:

"Save me! Save me!"

But before any ladder could be placed up against her window, a great volume of flame shot out of the room from behind her, completely enveloping her.

She screamed out:

"Ned Blaze! Ned Blaze! Save me!"

Then she sank down and perished in the flames.

Ned was at home when he heard of it.

Some one came by and told him about the young girl calling for him.

He burst into tears, and ran to his room. His mother followed him, but he was inconsolable.

The next morning he had a high fever, and Dr. Hepworth was sent for.

"What's the matter? How did this thing come about?" the doctor asked of Mrs. Blaze, and she told him.

"Oh, yes! It is mental."

Ned hadn't a word to say, but submitted to the physician like the docile patient he was.

Twenty-four hours later he was delirious from brain fever, and kept calling out to the firemen:

"Bring a ladder here! Let me go! Let me go, or she will perish."

All through his delirium a friend had to be with him to hold him down. He wanted to spring up and run to a fire.

Lena Mitchell came and watched with his mother, and their tears mingled as they listened to his ravings.

It required a strong man to hold him down in his bed; but at last the skill of the physician prevailed. The fever was broken and reason returned.

When he recognized Lena he reached out his hand to her, saying:

"I have been very sick, haven't I?"

"Yes, Ned, you've been very ill; but, thank heaven, you are better now!"

He was as weak as a six-month's-old infant, but he was a good patient to nurse, gave very little trouble, and gradually he began regaining his strength.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

Ned's illness lasted a fortnight, during which time the entire community sympathized with him and his mother.

They had understood what brought about his sudden illness, and how he raved in his delirium about saving the young girl's life who had called for him in her death agonies.

Of course visitors at the cottage were not permitted to see him.

Miss Mitchell and his mother were the constant nurses. Other friends volunteered their services.

Finally, when he improved sufficiently to sit up, Lena said to him:

"Ned, you need a change of scene. You must take a trip somewhere. To the mountains, or the seashore, until you have recovered your strength."

He shook his head, and said:

"It would do me good, but I can't go. I must go to work."

"Yes, you can go, and you must go. I will go with you as Mrs. Ned Blaze."

He turned and looked at her.

She gazed into his eyes and said:

"I mean it, Ned. I've talked with your mother about it. You have a pretty strong will, but mine is stronger than yours now, for you've been sick and I haven't. As soon as you are a little stronger we will be married, and I'll see to it that you shall ever after be well and happy and will not want to run to any more fires."

Then she told him how he had raved in his delirium, and was fighting fires and saving lives all the time.

"Well, I could have saved that girl's life."

"I know, dear," she returned; "you should say you were not there to perish with her. It was an awful fate, but you have others to live for."

"Who was she?" he asked, and she told him her name. She was a mill girl, and the only one of her family who perished, though three others were burned to death also.

They were given a public funeral, and the people, by subscription, aided the families liberally and provided new homes for them.

"I know how you feel about it, dear," she said to him, "but I will try to help you forget it."

He slowly recovered his strength, and finally said he would go back to the store to work.

"Indeed, you won't," said his mother. "Arrangements have been made for yours and Lena's marriage, and you will go on a trip to California, stopping wherever you please, and remaining a month at the famous Colorado Springs."

"Mother, I haven't a dollar in the world."

"Yes; everybody knows that; but the devotion that you have shown to your mother and sisters, as well as your duty as a fireman, is just like the devotion that Lena shows to you. She has a big fortune of her own, and she has arranged that we shall be provided for during the rest of our lives. She says it's only just a little bit of the debt that she owes you; so you mustn't make any protest against anything she wishes to do. No man was ever loved more than she loves you."

Of course, he submitted. He couldn't do otherwise.

They were married at the Mitchell residence, which had been completed, and the family had been living in it a couple of weeks only.

Every fireman in Hobart was invited to be present, and they appeared at Lena's request in full fireman's uniform.

The guests were so numerous that the ceremony had to be performed on the piazza of the house, while the spectators stood out on the lawn.

Then feasting and dancing followed, and the festivities were kept up until one o'clock in the morning.

Then the happy couple entered a carriage to go to the train.

The firemen unhitched the horses, attached a long rope to it, and thus they were drawn through the city's streets to the station.

Every house along the line of march was illuminated, and greetings were given them every step of the way.

The happy bride waved her handkerchief in return, and they were overwhelmed with flowers that were thrown into the carriage on its way to the depot.

Mr. Mitchell spared no expense to give them a good send-off. A private car had been chartered to take them clear across the continent, and with them went several friends of the bride's.

During their absence Mr. Mitchell had purchased a beautiful home for them and furnished it magnificently, and they at once took possession of it.

They are living there to this day. They have three little children, a son and two daughters.

Ned no longer runs to fires, but whenever he hears the fire-bell calling the firemen to their post of duty and danger, he sits down and experiences sad feelings; but he has never forgotten the promise made to his mother and wife.

Next week's issue will contain "JACK WALL OF WALL STREET; OR, THE BOY WHO BROKE THE BIG DEAL." By H. K. Shackelford.

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

CURRENT NEWS

A profound sensation has been caused by a rumor that when this war ends, no matter which side wins, Gibraltar, the impregnable fortress at the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea, which has been held by the British for two hundred years, is to be restored to Spain under a secret treaty between Germany and England.

The Pittsburgh National League Baseball Club announced recently that it has forty-four players under contract for the 1915 season. The number is comprised of seven catchers, fifteen pitchers, eleven outfielders and eleven infielders, and does not include the veteran, "Hans" Wagner. No fear is felt that Wagner will not sign with the Pirates. The veteran always waits until the team leaves on its training trip before signing.

Twelve years ago Oscar Diceman, now of Hudsonville, Mich., saved a little girl from drowning in a canal in Holland. He was profusely thanked by the child's father, and shortly afterward came to this country and forgot all about the incident. Recently, however, he received a letter from the old country saying that the father had died recently, and in his will provided a bequest of \$9,000 for the man who had saved his daughter's life.

Abel Cartwright, who lives near Peabody, Kan., celebrated his one-hundredth birthday anniversary by driving his own motor car and carrying his relatives and friends about the country. Relatives from Illinois and Kansas were present at his home and neighbors gathered to take part in the celebration. Mr. Cartwright is a native of Vermont. He has been married sixty-six years. The first vote cast by Mr. Cartwright was for Martin Van Buren for President of the United States. He is still in good health and enjoys driving his car.

An aviator who has just returned to Paris from the front tells of the difficulties encountered by the flying men on reconnaissance duty. He said: "We are forced to fly at a height of about one mile and a quarter, which makes observations difficult, as small objects, even with the aid of the strongest glasses, assume unfamiliar shapes and become foreshortened. If we fly under that height, we are greeted by a hail of rifle fire, which is far more effective than the cannon. We fear the rifles more than the bursting shrapnel, as the fire of the regiments, concentrated on a single object, is far more deadly."

Sabulite is the name of a new explosive, invented in Belgium, now in use in Australia and New Zealand and recently introduced at the Anaconda mines in Montana. It is from 36 to 50 per cent. more powerful than dynamite and can be exploded only by a percussion cap. It is a mixture of nitrate of ammonia, trinitrotoluhl and calcium silicide. The last, which is the essential principle, is a recent

product of the electric furnace. This takes the place of the powdered aluminum that is used with nitrate powders and is much cheaper than that, besides being stable under ordinary atmospheric conditions. Sabulite does not explode when burned or when hammered upon an anvil.

Hale Britton, of Richmond Center, Ohio, started down his pasture lane the other night, when his dog struck a coon trail and soon landed the coon up a tree. Britton went to the house for a shotgun and when he returned he could just see the coon high up in the top of the tree. He shot at the animal several times, then decided the shotgun was too short-ranged to reach him. After telling his dog to keep a close watch, Britton went over to Dr. Tinkham's house and the two returned with Tinkham's rifle. From then on until 1 o'clock they took turns firing at the coon. Finally they built a fire and waited until daylight. Then they learned the coon they had been shooting at all night was a crow's nest.

Famishing, crawling on his hands and knees like an animal, and close to madness, Samuel H. Baker, a prominent Denver attorney, real estate and mining broker, arrived at Thompson, Utah, December 3, after having been lost for five days in the Utah desert. He had been without food or water, and his only sustenance came from a small can of milk which he had put in his pocket when he started out. Baker and M. J. Gill, of Denver, had gone to Salt Valley, twenty-two miles southeast of Thompson, to inspect some radium properties. Baker, provided only with a light lunch, hired a horse and set out alone across the desert. Saturday night he reached a sheep camp and turned the horse out to graze. The animal returned to Thompson. Sunday morning, Baker, failing to find his horse, started out on foot in search of the animal. He reached his uranium claims, but, continuing his search for the animal, became hopelessly lost.

Over thirty years ago Thomas Edison, the inventor, said that some day the phonograph would perfect the telephone. His prophecy is partly realized in his latest invention, called the telescribe. The telescribe is a simple little instrument. An ordinary desk telephone is equipped with two transmitters and two receivers. The talker uses one set and the other set is attached to a phonograph record, which takes down every word that is said on the wire. It is easy to see that the new invention can have many uses, bad as well as good. It can perform service in making criminals confess, as it will be possible to use it in much the way that the dictograph has been employed. It will be valuable for business men who desire to have records of their conversations over the wire. There are many cases of this nature in which it will come in handy. The apparatus is so made that it takes down conversations of nearly any length without its operation being heard on the phone.

THE BOY WHO DID IT

—OR—

ALL FOR THE GOOD OF THE TOWN

By William Wade

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XXI.

THE NIGHT HUNT IN THE SWAMP.

It was alarming enough to almost make friends of these two bitter enemies, and work together they did for the moment.

Both went dashing into the forest, Jake leading the way, carrying his rifle ready for business.

The cry was not heard again.

Sounds still more startling were, however, heard.

Some large animal was breaking through the forest ahead of them.

"Jake Benner," said Rod, hissing, "understand one thing. If Annie dies to-night you die, too. I shall demand her life at your hands."

"That's what you say," retorted Jake. "You can talk that way if you choose, but there are two to play that game. Perhaps while you are killing me I may be killing you, but let's save Annie first if we can."

Rod made no reply as they ran on.

Whatever might be the truth, Jake Benner seemed to be in earnest about saving Annie.

He knew where she was supposed to be, while Rod knew nothing. It was no time to quarrel now.

As they ran on the sounds ceased.

"It's too late, I'm afraid!" groaned Jake.

"Do you think the bear has got her?" gasped Rod.

"I'm afraid so! Oh, what shall we do?"

It took all Rod's will power to keep cool.

"Tell what you know about Annie, Jake Benner!" Rod cried. "Tell it straight, or——"

"Stop, Rod!"

"Well?"

"Don't get your mad up. Do you think I ran off with your girl?"

"I'm not thinking. I'm waiting for your answer."

"Well, then, I didn't. I suppose by this time you know of my trouble. I'm hiding here to keep out of the way of the detectives. Annie was out in her boat; somehow she lost her way and drifted in here. It was dark, and looked like a storm. I advised her to stay here till morning, and she agreed to stop in the tree house——"

"What tree house? What do you mean?" cried Rod.

"Why, you don't know this place as well as I thought you did, in spite of the fact that your friend Moran lived here so long," replied Jake, with something of a sneer. "Look! There is the tree house! Did the hermit never show you that?"

They were in the thick woods at a considerable distance behind the hut now.

Jake, as he spoke, pulled out a fuse and struck a light.

There, up in the branches of a tall oak, was a small hut, with a ladder leading up to the platform upon which it was built.

Rod had never seen or even heard of it before, intimately as he knew Moran.

Nor was he in the mood to think of it now, for there at the foot of the ladder lay a girl's hat, which he instantly recognized as Annie's.

There were fragments of a dress scattered about, too, and there in the spongy ground were the tracks of a bear.

Rod almost fainted.

"Jake Benner, whatever the rights of all this may be, Annie has been here, and the bear has got her," he said. "There should be a lantern back there in the hut. Go and get it. We must save Annie if we can!"

"Just what I said in the place!" growled Jake. "I'll get the lantern, Rod. You stay right here. I love Annie Winton just as deeply as you do. I would not harm her for the world!"

"Go! Go now!" said Rod, in a suppressed voice, for it was all he could do to keep from jumping and seizing him by the throat.

But all he could do was wait, for it was impossible to follow the bear's trail in the dark.

Presently he saw the lantern flashing in the direction of the hut, and Jake soon joined him.

"It's a blamed shame," Jake growled. "I warned Annie about the danger. This is the third time bears have been seen over on these islands lately. It is too bad."

Rod made no answer, but followed after Jake, who was flashing the lantern along the trail.

He just felt as if he couldn't speak to the fellow, as though he would have to jump on him and fight it out to a finish if he did.

The trail led almost down to the water's edge, and then suddenly turned back into the forest, and passing around the hut came again to the water not far from the point where Bill Brown had disappeared.

Once more it touched the water's edge, and then turned back into the forest again and passed through a thick clump of bushes so thorny that to attempt to penetrate them was no use, and the two boys were driven back.

"What shall we do now?" said Jake. "Oh, Rod, I wish you would speak and tell me what you think. Honest Injun, I wouldn't hurt a hair of Annie Winton's head. You ought to know that, if you don't."

"Let's get around these bushes and see if the trail comes out on the other side," said Rod.

"That's a good idea. I'll go you—come on!"

"Wait half a second," said Rod. "Perhaps we can hear something."

They listened, but all was still in the bushes.

"That may be the bear's hold out," suggested Jake.

"Give me the lantern," said Rod. "I'll go around these bushes. You stand guard here in case the flashing of the light starts the bear out."

"All right. I'm ready for him if he comes."

Rod seized the lantern and forced his way around the edge of the thorny clump.

(To be continued)

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

TO FLY THE AMERICAN FLAG.

Since the passage of the act of August 18th, eighty-one foreign-built vessels of 285,268 gross tons have been admitted to American registry. Of these, nineteen are passenger steamships, and sixty-one are freight vessels. According to Commissioner Chamberlain, additional ships are being added to the American registry every week. Sixty-eight of the above vessels were formerly under the British flag, eight were German and five were Belgian vessels.

PROPOSED BALTIC AND BLACK SEA CANAL.

The commission appointed by the Russian Duma and Senate four years ago has reported favorably on the proposed Baltic and Black Sea canal scheme. It is proposed to canalize the Dnieper and the Dwina, the former flowing into the Black Sea at Kherson, and the latter into the Gulf of Livonia and the Baltic Sea at Riga. The sources of the two rivers at the divide would be connected by artificial waterways. The length of the canal would be 1,540 miles.

HUNTS RABBIT, FINDS GOLD.

Jess Connell, one of the owners of the Humboldt mine in the Trinity range, Nevada, has perhaps discovered a mining prospect in the Trinity range district.

Connell's find was unusually fortunate, inasmuch as it was made while he was hunting jack-rabbits for his evening meal.

What he supposed to be an outcropping of limestone and granite was in reality gold quartz, and a sample with which he returned is estimated by old-time miners to run about \$5,000 to the ton. The vein approximates six inches in width and crops for 30 feet.

GIRL SOMNAMBULIST CUTS OFF HER CURLS.

The mystery of what became of the pretty flaxen curls of Miss Corda Loft, of Brashear, Mo., who lost them while she slept in her home, has been solved. The curls were found in a suitcase under her bed, and because of a dream which she recalls having that night she is convinced that she cut them off herself while walking in her sleep.

The loss of the young woman's hair, discovered when she arose and found what was left badly bobbed, has furnished one of the principal topics of conversation here since.

"I remember dreaming that I was going to leave Brashear, and that I was packing my grip," she said in recounting her experience for the several hundredth time.

"Look in the suitcase then," suggested one of her practical hearers. And in the suitcase was the missing hair and the curlers which the young lady had wielded on it.

Miss Loft has been a somnambulist for several years and has had a number of queer adventures while walking in her sleep.

HOW "AMERICA" WAS WRITTEN.

In connection with the recent presentation of the original manuscript of "America" to the Harvard College Library by the surviving children of the Rev. Dr. Samuel Francis Smith, author of the hymn, the following account by Dr. Smith of how he came to write it is revived:

"The hymn 'America' was the fruit of examining a number of music books and songs for German public schools, placed in my hands by Lowell Mason, Esq. Falling in with the tune in one of them, now called 'America,' and being pleased with its simple and easy movement, I glanced at the German words and, seeing that they were patriotic, instantly felt the impulse to write a patriotic hymn of my own to the same tune. Seizing a scrap of waste paper, I put upon it, within half an hour, the verses substantially as they stand to-day. I did not propose to write a national hymn. I did not know that I had done so. The whole matter passed out of my mind.

"A few weeks afterward I sent to Mr. Mason some translations and other poems; this must have chanced to be among them. This occurred in February, 1832. To my surprise, I found later that he had incorporated it into a programme for the celebration of July 4, 1832, in Park Street Church, Boston."

VERMONT'S BIG CROP OF CHRISTMAS TREES.

The annual shipment from this State of Christmas trees to the city markets was made recently. The total was over 1,500,000 trees, by far the largest number ever harvested, and for which the Vermont farmers will receive about \$100,000.

One large Indianapolis buyer died the past year, but his widow continued the business successfully.

The trees are consigned in carload lots to commission merchants in the large cities—New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and the larger cities of the West as far as St. Louis.

Each tree is neatly sawed off near the base, trimmed and tied and then bundled, the largest trees going in a bundle by themselves, and other bundles holding from two to twelve trees. The farmers receive from 3 to 15 cents apiece for trees; the ultimate consumer pays all the way from 50 cents to \$10. Each carload contains from 500 to 600 bundles, and averages 1,500 trees to the car.

The fir tree is the standard variety, though balsam trees are in great demand in New York because of their fragrant odor.

The 1910 Legislature passed a law establishing a license fee of 25 cents for each person or firm dealing in Christmas trees, but the Legislature of 1912 repealed it. While many claim that the annual harvesting of so many young trees will soon deforest the State, others deny it, pointing out that the buyers confine their work mostly to back pastures where there is a large second growth of trees and numerous "scrubs." Some farmers this season received as much as \$300 for their product.

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New York

A fine milch cow belonging to Mrs. John Yoeman, of Franklin, Ind., was killed in an unusual way when she was being led from the pasture to the barn for the night. When Mrs. Yoeman crossed the railroad track a train was heard approaching. Despite all efforts to hurry the cow across she firmly insisted on planting herself in the middle of the track until struck by the train.

A man who said he was Maurice Goldblatt, No. 4833 Prairie avenue, a violin instructor at the Chicago Musical College, telephoned a local paper that he had found a pearl valued at \$150 while eating oysters in a restaurant on Wabash avenue. He said his dinner cost 90 cents, so he made a profit of \$149.10 and got his dinner for nothing.

Enea Bossi, a member of the Italian Aviation Corps, arrived here recently from Genoa on the liner *Tomaso di Savoia*, with a commission from the Italian government, he said, to purchase in the United States aeroplanes and aircraft motors of high power. "The Italian government has seventeen dirigibles," he said, "two of which are as big as Zeppelins; 280 biplanes, and seventy hydroplanes. Several of the latter have been constructed so that they can launch torpedoes." Mr. Bossi said that he had been working on a big aeroplane for flying long distances over the Mediterranean, which was equipped with a 600-horsepower engine. He will turn it over to the government.

After more than 100 years' continuous service the town pump on the square in Navarre, a village five miles south of Massillon, Ohio, has been removed to make way for an ornamental iron drinking fountain to be supplied by the municipal water system. Patrons of the old well have raised a storm of protest. They declare the village water is unfit to drink, but that the old well gave a supply cool and pure. Rochester Square merchants are planning to establish a rival fountain. The fountain craze started in Navarre recently when farmers who went to market complained they were forced to pump water for their horses and automobile radiators.

Superintendent Cole, of the Hornet and Iron Mountain mines, announces that Bear's Dip cave, newly discovered greatest natural wonder in Shasta County, Cal., is soon to be wired electrically and thrown open to the public. Because of inaccessibility less than half a dozen persons have explored its dark depths, containing the strangest, most highly colored and extremely beautiful copper formations ever seen. There are many crystal pools, and when illuminated the cave will be a fairyland. It is expected to attract visitors from all over the State. Metal stalactites of a hundred colors are being prepared for display at the exposition by M. E. Dittmar. The mine owners believe the cave will become as great an attraction as eruptive Mount Lassen.

THE COUNT OF CONNEMARA

—OR—

The Old Pirate's Secret Treasure

By J. P. Richards

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XIX.

THE COUNT'S WAY OUT OF IT.

The blood was still flowing from a cut on the side of the big man's head, and he appeared to be in a dazed condition.

He gazed around until his eye fell on the young count, when he brightened up a little, as he said to himself:

"He'll get me out of the scrape, and I'll be even with the girl yet."

"Where's my father, you big villain?" cried Captain Draco, shaking his sword at the prisoner.

"How can I tell?" was the surly reply. "I wish I never saw you or him."

"Wait until you get the rope around your neck, and you'll tell," cried Joan. "Oh, if we could only find Garry now."

The little rogue kept out of the way, but he was not idle.

He had received certain instructions from his young master, in case of trouble, and Garry was carrying them out.

Grace Draco was a sweet-tempered young lady, but she became fearfully excited and angry as she witnessed the proceedings.

Stepping down to confront her brother, she cried in indignant tones:

"Do you forget, Myron, that Tom Gilfoil rescued me from the pirates, and that he fought like a hero for me?"

"I don't forget, but I believe it was all a blind. He has betrayed father to the pirates, and he must die."

"You are a brute then to accuse the Count of Connemara on the testimony of that hateful girl, who is trying to have her father and her brother hung. You are as bad as she is, and I disown you as a brother."

"Disown away, but I am bound to find father, or to avenge him."

"You are getting yourself into a nice scrape, Myron," said Captain Butler.

"Lookout for yourself, Captain Butler," was young Draco's sharp retort, "as you will have to answer for letting the pirates escape."

"And who will answer for the loss of the beautiful frigate?" interposed Maria Costello, as she cast a scornful glance at Captain Draco.

The young sailor winced and frowned at the glorious creature, while he muttered something under his breath.

"That struck home," remarked the old pirate with a loud laugh.

"Look to your prisoners, and bring them along," cried Captain Draco, as he turned to mount his horse.

"One moment," cried the young count, as the dragoons

were closing on him. "Don't you dare touch me, you rascals."

The young man drew his sword and made a sweep around him that caused the dragoons to fall back.

"He resists, he resists!" yelled Captain Draco, drawing a pistol, "and down with him."

And the young sailor aimed the weapon at the young count.

Grace Draco pushed aside one of the dragoons, uttering a cry of indignation the while, and flung herself in front of the threatened youth.

"Shame, shame, Myron," she cried. "Would you murder the young gentleman?"

"Let him surrender and meet the charge then. You stand aside, silly girl."

"Yes, Miss Grace," said the young count. "Please stand aside, and allow me to get out of this trouble in my own way."

"But I see murder in his eyes."

"He will not slay me, young lady. See!—how I disarm him."

The young man made a sudden spring forward and struck the pistol from Captain Draco's grasp, hurling him to the ground as well.

The action appeared to be a signal for the young count's followers.

Some of the dragoons were closing on Barry again, when out from the side of the house rushed a dozen armed men, who dashed at the dragoons with sabers, one of them crying:

"To the rescue of our beloved young master."

Grace Draco screamed with terror as she saw the count's armed followers attack the dragoons, and she cried:

"Oh, count, count, don't let your followers kill them all!"

"Disarm them only, men!" cried the young man in Spanish, "and secure them. Captain Draco, you should lose another eye!"

The young sailor had regained his feet, and he drew his sword to rush on the young count.

"Treachery, treachery!" he cried. "Captain Butler, are you a traitor?"

The young soldier stood like one dazed when thus addressed, and Maria Costello was clinging to his arm and whispering:

"Please don't interfere, as they will not hurt the soldiers."

"I must, I must, or I will be branded as a traitor! You hear them?"

"Then save your honor, but remember that the young count is my friend," answered Maria.

"Spare my brother, count!" cried Grace, as the old foes crossed swords again.

The count's followers were then disarming the outnumbered dragoons, who had offered a very sharp resistance when assailed.

"For your sake, I will spare him, young lady," answered the young count, "but I will show him that I am always his master."

(To be continued)

INTERESTING TOPICS

CANNIBALS IN NEW GUINEA.

There are cannibals in the western part of Papua, or New Guinea, and W. N. Beaver, who has spent many years in studying them, writes in the magazine "Man" that they eat human flesh principally because they like it. He says that in many cases ritual or ceremonial is the prime reason for cannibalism, but that in by far the larger number of cases the reason is that it is food. The practice, however, is not habitual, but exceptional. Among the Papuans there are also many snake-eating tribes, and Mr. Beaver notes that a majority of these are also cannibals.

DEER KILLS MAN IN LAKE.

David Gibson, a hunter, met death while battling with a wounded deer in Sawyer Lake, near Antigo, Wis.

This was revealed when Gibson's body was recovered recently. His head was badly cut, his arms and the upper part of his body bruised, and his clothing torn. The body was located in deep water.

Gibson, while hunting with his brother, pursued a wounded deer to the lake. The animal plunged in and, although it had grown dark, Gibson followed. His brother heard him call for help, but the darkness prevented him from seeing what was taking place out in the lake. He obtained a boat, but could find neither his brother nor the deer.

Searching parties spent two days in the hunt for the body.

SQUIRRELS MAKE RAID ON ATTIC.

A squadron of flyers has laid siege to and captured one stronghold in the heart of the residence district of Huntington, Ind. The besiegers have appropriated a winter's stock of supplies and those assailed have capitulated.

The squadron comprises a number of flying squirrels. A winter's supply of walnuts was scented in the attic at the home of Clinton Butler, an Erie engineer. An opening into the attic was discovered and possession taken by the squirrels. The scamperings of the squirrels were heard by the Butler family during the day and their chatter disturbed the sleep of the family at night. Investigation resulted in solving the disappearance of the nuts.

In an effort to win the friendship of the little animals food is set out for them. It is hoped that the squirrels will become tame and retain their home in the vicinity of the Butler place. School children also sprinkle the lawns with nuts and bread crusts. They are amused by the antics of the squirrels as they scamper over the branches of the trees in that neighborhood.

A RARE CACTUS.

A rare kind of cactus, which for fifty years has been a stranger in the museums of the world, and never has been seen in the United States, arrived recently from Chili on

the steamship Santa Marta. It will be exhibited in the Bronx Botanical Gardens.

With the cactus was Dr. J. N. Rose, research associate of the Department of Botanical Research of the Carnegie Institute, Washington, and connected also with the Smithsonian Institution of Washington. He spent six months, much money and infinite energy to acquire the plant.

Its botanical name is *Cereus Castaneus*, and Dr. Rose described it as "exactly like the American cactus, except somewhat different." A specimen gathered fifty years ago and stored in the museum of Santiago was all Dr. Rose had to guide him in the search for it.

The first step in the quest was to go to Santiago. That Dr. Rose did. Other means of transportation not being available, he got a cart. Then, after hardships and three days, he found the cactus in a barren spot on Chili's desolate coast. He found, in fact, a whole bed of them. He filled a box with them.

Dr. Rose brought with him also 75 other kinds of cactus that never before have been in the United States, but not so rare as the *Cereus Castaneus*. Some of them are the *Echinocactus* and the *Opuntia*.

He brought also 1,000 varieties of new plants that are not cactus, and several orchids. The living specimens have been shipped to the Botanical Gardens, and the dead ones to the Carnegie Institute in Washington. Dr. Rose gave assurances that out of respect to the suspense of the public they all will be placed on exhibition with the greatest possible haste.

What most impressed him in his travels, Dr. Rose said, were the shifting sands of Peru. These sand dunes, in the southern part of the country and at an elevation above the sea level of 5,000 feet, shift at the rate of forty feet a year. Although the wind is all that shifts them, they move with such regularity their positions can be calculated five years in advance.

They are in the form of crescents, about 100 feet in diameter and 10 feet high in the center, sloping off to nothing at the tails. Their movements do not damage cultivated lands, Dr. Rose explained, because there are no cultivated lands.

When traveling on the Southern Railroad of Peru, Dr. Rose said, an engineer told him the road thus prevents the sand dunes from obstructing its tracks. When the dunes are about to cover it, a gang of men is sent out to shovel half a wagon load of gravel on the tails of the crescent. Being thus pinned down, the dunes remain stationary.

Dr. Rose said he didn't know anything about the financial or political conditions of the countries of South America, except they are very bad, and the sentiment seemed to be in favor of Americans. In Chili the government detailed a man to accompany him. In that country, he said, when anything is well done they say it is "American," thus expressing their highest praise.

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

What are believed from markings and form to be relics more than 100 years old of the days when the Hudson Bay trapper traversed the Oregon forests are two large traps recently uncovered on the Upper McKenzie River by workmen on the Government road crew. The traps, which are huge affairs, hand-forged and of odd design, were found by Walter Boon, a resident at McKenzie Bridge. He uncovered the traps three feet underground, while building a new piece of road at the foot of Deadhorse grade, just above Strawberry flats, eighty miles east of Eugene, Ore.

Many years ago, when David Hammond, of Wilmot, S. Dak., now known as Uncle Dave, was in the prime of life, he met and loved a young girl just budding into womanhood. Something estranged them. The young woman married another. Recently Uncle Dave, long a settler of Roberts County, left on a trip to the East, the object of which he refused to disclose. He returned home recently accompanied by a bride, his sweetheart of almost a half century ago. She was Mrs. Barberg Burke of Illinois. The bridegroom is eighty-four years old; the bride, sixty-four.

A curious, strange specimen of lizard or scorpion was captured by Walter T. Todd, near the trolley station of the Chambersburg, Greencastle and Waynesboro Street Railway Company at Highfield. The reptile, or what not, was about eight inches in length and the color of brick dust. It was found lying on the ground only a few feet from the station and, on account of the rain and cool weather, was unable to use its locomotive powers very actively and was easily captured. The reptile had an elongated body without scales, four short legs and short tail, and its body was almost as tough as rubber. Where it came from no one seems to know.

A twelve-pound sweet potato raised by T. O. Smith on his patch, in Forsyth, Ga., caused Z. M. Maynard, a local warehouseman, to "crawfish" out of an agreement that he had made. Listening to Mr. Smith's bragging about the size of some of his potatoes, Mr. Maynard stated that he could eat "at one sitting" the biggest potato that Smith could raise. When Smith hurried home and returned with a tuber that tipped the beam at twelve pounds and resembled a prize pumpkin rather than a sweet potato, Mr. Maynard begged to be relieved from his agreement. The potato, which is a specimen of unusual size, has been on display at one of the local banks.

The oldest hotel in New York City is the half-century-old ship *Jacob A. Stander*, moored at the foot of West Twenty-third street. The five-deck vessel is the home of seventy-five girls and young men, most of whom are orphans. The *Stander* has its own electric-light plant, and, as other hotels advertise, "all modern conveniences." It is owned by the Arbuckle Deep Sea Hotel Company, a philan-

thropic corporation. The guests are charged a nominal sum for room and board. In the summer it goes on sails at night, returning in time for its passengers to go to work in the morning. Last October the boat sprung a leak and sunk when a supply of coal was being taken on for the winter, but the water was pumped out and the hotel again floated.

The new school promised McCarthy, Alaska, by Delegate Wickersham on his last visit has brought up another problem more puzzling to solve. It is the question of a teacher. One faction wants a teacher young and pretty, while the other faction wants an equally efficient but homely teacher. Old-timers pointing to the example of other camps declare that a young and pretty teacher will not be able to stand out the first month, but will succumb to the many offers of marriage which it is confidently declared will come from the susceptible sourdoughs and lonely miners of the creeks. The parents of the children to be educated want a plain if not positively homely teacher, one who will stay on the job, while the ardent would-be swains are just as warmly espousing the cause of beauty.

Bert Hall, of the Vancouver Champions, is entitled to a place among the notable performers of the Northwestern League in 1914. Up to the close of the regular season he had pitched fifty-four consecutive innings with only one run scored against him. September 15th, pitching against Seattle, he added eight and one-third more innings to this number, making his record sixty-two and one-third consecutive innings with only one run. This appears to be a record for the present Northwestern League, and there are no figures available to controvert it in the Pacific Northwest circuit, which ended in 1903. Over in Idaho they have a little on them in this line of talk, as it will be recalled Walter Johnson, when he was with the Weiser club, pitched seventy-five consecutive innings without yielding a run.

From the Cumberland Mountains of Pike County, Eastern Kentucky, comes the story of an old mountaineer who attended his own funeral services, being carried to the log cabin meeting house to listen to the words of the evangelist who travels through the mountains. Jed Maerson, a typical mountaineer, living in one of the wildest sections, some distance from Elkhorn City, became ill and feared no funeral services would follow his death. Therefore when the exhorter made his periodical trip through the hills he requested that his funeral be held. The day was appointed and the mountain people from miles around flocked to the log cabin church. Maerson, who had been failing fast, was much improved on the day of the funeral and was carried to the church. The obsequies, as is often the case in the mountains, were made a gala occasion, after the services an old-fashioned dance being held.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 30, 1914.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

Centre County, Pa., has at least two Dianas, Mary and Zilla Sharer, who killed a deer. The girls dragged it a half-mile to their home, skinned and dressed it. The buck had four prongs and weighed 160 pounds.

Frank Lewis and Isaac Gearhart, while digging for fern roots on an island three miles below Danville, Pa., unearthed a rust-covered iron box. They found in it \$16,000 in Mexican silver, \$30 in gold Spanish doubloons and \$1,000 in smaller coins of ancient mintage.

Ezra Light, who resides with his son, Ellsworth Light, on one of the dairy farms near Hershey, Pa., is a remarkable man for his age. Although seventy years old, he has worked in the harvest field during the past summer and at present husks seventy shocks of corn a day. This is a record that is not excelled by many in this entire community.

Miss Dora Keen, of Philadelphia, who left August 15th for Harriman and College Fiords, Prince William Sound, with a party of three men, to explore the glaciers of the fiords and the mountains behind them, has sent word to Valdez, Alaska, that her expedition has been successful. The members reached the sources of the Harvard glacier at 6,000 feet elevation, sixteen miles from the face of the glacier. A pass from the head of the glacier to the Matanuska Valley was not found.

If a one-armed man succeeds in supporting a wife and thirteen children on $1\frac{1}{4}$ acres of irrigated land, why should a man with a small family and two sturdy arms complain a hard luck? E. R. Davis, a native of Utah, was engaged in mining until he met with an accident and lost his left arm. He bought four acres of land in Milford Valley, Utah, of which but a little over an acre is under an irrigation ditch. From this small portion of irrigated land he says he has supported a family of fourteen in comfort. He raises vegetables, fruits and berries.

Because he does not trust gravediggers, Jasper Suiter has prepared a sepulcher for himself, his wife, and their son Romeo in their family plot near their home in Ohio,

across the river from Huntington, W. Va. Suiter is an old riverman, now engaged in farming. Though he is sixty years old, he does not anticipate passing away in the near future, nor does he anticipate the demise of his wife or son, but he wanted to "be prepared." He has dug three graves, just wide enough to fit the coffin of each, and with just enough slope to drain properly. "Oh, it doesn't worry me at all," said Mrs. Suiter. "Jasper wanted to know that our graves were dug proper, and so he did it himself. He said he didn't want anybody digging his burying place, because they'd do it in the quickest way possible, and so he did it, and took his time. I reckon they're done right." Suiter worked on his last resting place in moments he could spare from farming.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

Missionary—If you are about to kill me, let me sing a hymn. Cannibal—No, sir! No music with meals in this place.

Boy—I want to buy some paper. Dealer—What kind of paper? Boy—You'd better give me fly-paper. I want to make a kite.

Siliwon—Do you believe in long engagements? Cynicum—Of course. The longer a man is engaged, the less time he has to be married!

"What's a cowboy?" asked Fangle's seven-year-old boy. "I know," replied five-year-old Freddy, before Fangle could answer; "it's a bull."

Little Freddie (after listening to parental quarrel)—Mamma, if a little boy is very, very good, does he have to get married when he is grown up?

Messenger—Who's the swell ye was talking to, Jimmie? Newsboy—Aw! Him an' me's worked together for years. He's the editor of one o' my papers.

Nell—A girl shouldn't marry a man till she knows all about him. Belle—Good gracious! If she knew all about him she wouldn't want to marry him.

"Are you going to see the opening game at the Polo Grounds, Jimmy?" "Naw. What's de use? There ain't a knot-hole anywhere in de whole concrete wall."

Honey Child—Mamma, Miss Prim has been here an hour and the clock's going yet. Fond Mamma—What do you mean, dearie? Why shouldn't it go? Honey Child—But papa said when you told him Miss Prim was coming that she was enough to stop a clock.

A farmer boy and his best girl were seated in a buggy one evening in town, watching the people pass. Near-by was a popcorn vender's stand. Presently the lady remarked: "My! That popcorn smells good!" "That's right," said the gallant companion. "I'll drive up a little closer so you can smell it better."

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

AN INDIAN WILLIAM TELL.

Before the coming of the white man to this country, there lived in the region of what is now Florida a tribe of Indians. This tribe was ruled by Newakeum, a chief whose renown as a master of the bow and arrow had spread over the entire peninsula. He had many sons, but he loved Nogani the best of all. The tribe lived in peace and tranquility on the game brought in by Newakeum and his braves.

But in the year 1537 there came a change. White men, mostly Spaniards, led by Ferdinand de Soto, came to the village of Newakeum. From the first they looked on the Indians as inferiors and treated them as such, and this was returned by a deep hatred on the part of the red men. Accordingly, when one insolent fellow insulted a native, there arose a quarrel, in which he was killed. De Soto demanded reparation.

Now, among these white men, there was a certain Rudolf of Switzerland, a brother of the man who was killed. Going to his chief, he demanded the life of one of the sons of Newakeum. De Soto said to him: "Let us serve these savages as the Austrians served that famous William Tell of your country. We will have the chief kill his own son."

Rudolf told Newakeum of his general's plan, which was to happen on the morrow. He, going to De Soto, said that he would consent if they would leave his village and go on their journey. De Soto agreed.

On the next day Newakeum bade his son to be brave and to stand perfectly motionless, as he would hit the fruit and not touch him. Nogani, knowing his father's skill, promised to do so. Then, when all was ready, Newakeum bent the bow and shot the arrow, which cleft the fruit on Nogani's head. De Soto lived up to his promise and with his followers left the country and Newakeum never heard of him again.

CHRISTMAS TOYS MADE IN AMERICA.

One Milwaukee concern is doing its best to avert a Christmas toy famine threatened through the failure this year of the "made in Germany" crop. It is a hobby horse factory which is turning out something like 500 hobby horses a day besides a large output of other sorts of toys. It ships over 15,000 rocking horses a year, the majority of them to points inside the United States.

The rocking horse as it first appears in the factory is merely a round cedar block, the log being cut in horse lengths. The block is clamped into a turning lathe and in a short time it is taken out the exact shape of the complete body, minus the head and legs. Hundreds of these legless and headless bodies stacked into great piles present a grotesque appearance. But after heads, legs, manes and tails are fastened on and the body painted and mottled they are quite sightly.

Milwaukee also has several factories which turn out quantities of doll buggies and other toys. Doll carriages are made here in all kinds, from the little inexpensive go-cart to the 1914 model cars large enough for a life-size baby, and with the same springs and other details of construction.

In other factories are made writing desks, bookcases, doll dresses and chairs for boys and girls.

"In 1913," said a manufacturer, "the importation of toys from Germany was valued at wholesale rates at \$8,856,575. The factories of the United States produced playthings worth about \$8,264,000. Eliminating such articles as sleds, velocipedes, etc., the American output of what we makers call real toys was not much more than \$4,000,000. The market in low-priced mechanical toys must come to a standstill. We cannot compete in this country with the cheap German goods. I do not mean the really good mechanical toys; those we can and shall make in America; I mean the kind you buy on the street for five and ten cents."

A WOODPECKER'S STOREHOUSE.

A section of a telegraph pole that stood recently along one of the railroads near the Pacific Coast has been fairly riddled and honeycombed on its four sides by thousands of holes pecked and bored out by the California woodpecker. Of course, these numerous cavities weakened and destroyed the usefulness of the pole, which had to be cut down and replaced by a new one. The damaged telegraph pole is the result of the wisdom and foresight of this smart little bird who is able to see far beyond the end of his bill. It was occasioned by the problem of food and a practical knowledge of the necessity of laying something by for a rainy day. When autumn leaves begin to fall and hints of frost are in the atmosphere the woodpecker puts in his spare moments hiding fat, juicy acorns in nice little cavities pecked out by himself in pine trees. If these are scarce in the particular region of his habitat a high telegraph pole is considered ideal for a safe storage plant.

Though practically hidden from outside interference, these food store-houses are not beyond the reach of certain pilfering enemies of the bird and animal world, such as the jays, magpies and squirrels. To be on the guard against these robbers, the bird bores a deep cavity sufficient to take in his whole body, and there he stations himself to guard against any approaching marauders and trespassers. In consequence, there are numerous battles, and the ordinarily well-disposed and peaceful woodpecker, among its kind, becomes a vigorous fighter and all intruders are attacked and driven away in a hurry. During the spring and summer the food supply of the woodpecker consists of fruits, berries and to a great extent of various insects. From its destruction of the young larvae and many insect pests, the bird is looked upon as of considerable economic value in the community.

NAME CARDS

The newest fad in picture postals. They are beautifully lithographed in a variety of colors and have various names, such as Harry, Edith, etc., printed on the reverse side. Just the thing to mail to your friends. Price 6 for 10 cents, by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

VANISHING AND RE-APPEARING EGG.—Very fine, easy to perform and it produces a marvelous and mystifying effect. Egg is made to appear and vanish right before the eyes. Beautifully made. Price, 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

SURPRISE LETTER DRUM.

Stung! That was one on you! The joke? You send a friend a letter. He opens it, and that releases the drum. Instantly the sheet of note paper begins to bang and thump furiously, with a rippling, tearing sound. Guaranteed to make a man with iron nerves almost jump out of his skin. You can catch the sharpest wisenheimer with this one. Don't miss getting a few. Price, 6c. each by mail.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

The Bottle Imp.—The peculiarity of this little bottle is that it cannot be made to lie down, and yet by simply passing the hand over it, the performer causes it to do so. This trick affords great amusement, and is of convenient size to carry about. Price, 10c. H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

SNAP BACK MATCH SAFE.

Just out! A trick match safe. It is a beautifully nickel-plated box, of the size to hold matches. But when your friend presses the spring to take out a match, the lid flies back, and pinches his finger just hard enough to startle without hurting him. This is a dandy!

Price, 15c. each by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE PEG JUMPER.

A very effective pocket trick, easily to be performed by any one. A miniature paddle is shown. Central holes are drilled through it. A wooden peg is inside of the upper hole. Showing now both sides of the paddle, the performer causes, by simply breathing upon it, the peg to leave the upper hole, and appear in the middle one. Then it jumps to the lower hole, back to the middle one, and lastly to the upper hole. Both sides of the paddle are repeatedly shown. Price by mail, 15c. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

MAGIC COINER.

A mystifying and amusing trick. Tin blanks are placed under the little tin cup and apparently coined into dimes. A real money-maker. Price, 20c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE DISAPPEARING CIGAR.

A new and startling trick. You ask a friend if he will have a cigar; if he says yes (which is usually the case), you take from your pocket or cigar case, an ordinary cigar, and hand it to him. As he reaches out for it, the cigar instantly disappears right before his eyes, much to his astonishment. You can apologize, saying, you are very sorry, but that it was the last cigar you had, and the chances are that he will invite you to smoke with him if you will let him into the secret. It is not done by sleight-of-hand, but the cigar actually disappears so suddenly that it is impossible for the eye to follow it, and where it has gone, no one can tell. A wonderful illusion. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c. by mail, postpaid. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

NOISY HANDKERCHIEF.

A great deal of amusement may be had with this little article. It imitates the blowing of the nose exactly, except that the noise is magnified at least a dozen times, and sounds like the bass-horn in a German band. This device is used by simply placing it between the teeth and blowing. The harder the blow the louder the noise. Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid. H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

JAPANESE TWIRLER.

A wonderful imported paper novelty. By a simple manipulation of the wooden handles a number of beautiful figures can be produced. It takes on several combinations of magnificent colors. Price, 10c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

INITIAL WATCH FOB.

It has a neat enameled black strap, and small secure buckle, with a patent catch so that no watch can slip off. The handsome tortoise shell pendants are beautifully engraved with any initial you desire. The letter is fire gilt, cannot rub off, and is studded with nine Barrios diamonds. These fobs are the biggest value ever offered. Price, 25c. each, by mail, postpaid.

FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

THE AUTOMATIC RUNNING MOUSE

This mouse is so nearly a perfect imitation of the live animal as to not only deceive the ladies, but to even deceive the cat. Inside each mouse is a set of clock work which you wind up with a key, then place the mouse on the floor and it will run rapidly in every direction in a circle across the floor backward and forward as if to get away. Suddenly set it agoing in a room where there are ladies, and you will have the fun of hearing them scream and jump upon the chairs to escape the little rodent. This mechanical mouse is well worth 50c., but we will sell it for 30c., and send it by mail postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

"KNOCK-OUT" CARD TRICK.—Five cards are shown, front and back, and there are no two cards alike. You place some of them in a handkerchief and ask any person to hold them by the corners in full view of the audience. You now take the remaining cards and request anyone to name any card shown. This done, you repeat the name of the card and state that you will cause it to invisibly leave your hand and pass into the handkerchief, where it will be found among the other cards. At the word "Go!" you show that the chosen card has vanished, leaving absolutely only two cards. The handkerchief is unfolded by any person, and in it is found the identical card. Price, 10c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

ITALIAN TRANSFER.

With this remarkable invention any one can transfer pictures or engravings from newspapers or books, and make perfect copies of butterfly and moth wings for scrap books. It is the dry transfer process, cleanly, handy and reliable, and the results secured will astonish you. Transfer is a gelatinous substance put up in cakes, one of which is enclosed with a wooden rubber and full directions for producing pictures, it requiring but a few moments to make the transfer. Any picture in the newspapers can be speedily reproduced in your album, or elsewhere, a perfect copy being made, and several copies can be made from the same picture. Butterfly and moth wings can also be pictured, all the beautiful colors and markings on the wings being transferred, and thus an interesting and instructive collection of insect forms can be made and permanently preserved in a scrap book. Both young and old will take delight in using Transfer, and the price is so low that all can afford to have this new process at command. Price only 10c., 3 for 25c.; one dozen, 75c. by mail postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

Old Coins Wanted. \$1 to \$600 paid for hundreds of coins dated before 1895. Send 10c for our illustrated coin value book. 4x7; get posted. Clark & U Co., Box 95, La Roy, N. Y.

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ALUMINUM LIGHTER.

The neatest little lighter on the market, handy, safe, and always ready for use. It contains a long wick, a reservoir for gasoline, and a removable brass inside frame to which a file wheel is attached. This wheel engages a Ceric iron flint which is pushed up from a tube in the reservoir. A single turn of the wheel generates a spark and lights the wick. Price, 18c. each by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

JUMPING CARD.—A pretty little trick, easy to perform. Effect: A selected card returned to the deck jumps high into the air at the performer's command. Pack is held in one hand. Price of apparatus, with enough cards to perform the trick, 10c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE FIGHTING ROOSTERS.

A full blooded pair of fighting game cocks. These lilliputian fighters have real feathers, yellow legs and fiery red combs, their movements when fighting are perfectly natural and lifelike, and the secret of their movements is known only to the operator, who can cause them to battle with each other as often and as long as desired. Independent of their fighting proclivities they make very pretty mantel ornaments. Price for the pair in a strong box, 19c.; 3 pairs for 25c. by mail, postpaid. H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

PIGGY IN A COFFIN.

This is a wicked pig that died at an early age, and here he is in his coffin ready for burial. There will be a great many mourners at his funeral, for this coffin, pretty as it looks, is very tricky, and the man who gets it open will feel real grief. The coffin is made of metal, perfectly shaped and beautifully lacquered. The trick is to open it to see the pig. The man that tries it gets his fingers and feelings hurt, and piggy comes out to grunt at his victims. The tubular end of the coffin, which everyone (in trying to open) presses inward, contains a needle which stabs the victim in his thumb or finger every time. This is the latest and a very "impressive" trick. It can be opened easily by anyone in the secret, and as a neat catch-joke to save yourself from a bore is unsurpassed. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c., postpaid; one dozen by express, 75c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE JUMPING FROG.



This little novelty creates a world of laughter. Its chief attractiveness is that it takes a few seconds before leaping high in the air, so that when set, very innocently along side of an unsuspecting person, he is suddenly startled by the wonderful activity of this frog. Price, 15c. each by mail postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

MICROSCOPE.



By use of this wonderful little microscope you can magnify a drop of stagnant water until you see dozens of crawling insects; is also useful for inspecting grain, pork, linen, and numerous other articles. This little instrument does equally as good work as the best microscopes and is invaluable to the household. Is made of best finished brass; size when closed 1x2 1/2 inches. Price, 30c.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE FOUNTAIN RING.



A handsome ring connected with a rubber ball which is concealed in the palm of the hand. A gentle squeeze forces water or cologne in the face of the victim while he is examining it. The ball can be instantly filled by immersing ring in water same as a fountain pen filler. Price by mail, postpaid, 12c. each.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

LIGHTNING TRICK BOX.



A startling and pleasing illusion! "The ways of the world are devious," says Matthew Arnold, but the ways of the Lightning Trick Box when properly handled are admitted to be puzzling and uncertain. You take off the lid and show your friends that it is full of nice candy. Replace the lid, when you can solemnly assure your friends that you can instantly empty the box in their presence without opening it; and taking off the lid again, sure enough the candy has disappeared. Or you can change the candy into a piece of money by following the directions sent with each box. This is the greatest and best cheap trick ever invented.

Price, only 10c.; 3 for 25c., mailed, postpaid. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

WIZARD'S PACK OF TRICK CARDS.



A full pack of 53 cards, but by the aid of the instructions given, anyone can perform the most wonderful tricks. Many of the feats exhibited are truly marvelous, and astonish and amuse a whole audience. Positively no sleight-of-hand. The whole trick is in the cards. Price, 35c. by mail, postpaid.

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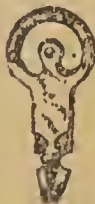
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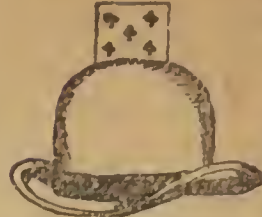
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